AIKIDO PIONEERS

PREWAR ERA

Interviews conducted
by **Stanley Pranin**










Aiki News

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Morihei Ueshiba in a formal portrait taken c. 1937

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Preface

Aikido Pioneers—Prewar Era contains material gleaned from interviews with twenty of the most important early students of Aikido Founder Morihei Ueshiba. These interviews were conducted in Japan over a 30-year period starting in 1973. The edited texts were published first in *Aiki News* magazine, and subsequently in *Aikido Journal*, the successor to the former publication, that began to appear in 1994. The individuals presented in this book were active during the prewar years, primarily in the 1920s and 30s. These students of the Founder witnessed and participated in the process that culminated in the birth of modern aikido. Of those interviewed, sadly all except two, have since passed away as of this writing. Their memories and observations constitute an invaluable source of information for those seeking an understanding of the roots of aikido.

These interviews have been reedited for publication in book form, with particular attention to the organization of materials by theme and the coherency of the narrative flow. In some cases, translations have been further refined, and questions have been rephrased to correspond more closely to the actual comments of the interviewees, or to provide supplementary information helpful to understanding a particular subject. A portion of this collection of interviews was previously published as *Aikido Masters: Prewar Students of Morihei Ueshiba* in 1992. Interviews with six additional students of Morihei Ueshiba, totaling more than 100 pages, and numerous photos—many heretofore unpublished—have been added to this new edition.

In this book, Japanese names appear according to Western usage, with first names first, and surnames second. This is for the purpose of avoiding the inevitable confusion which readers of English experience when the Japanese name order is preserved. However, a few

historical names that are already familiar to westerner readers, such as "Miyamoto Musashi," have been left in the standard Japanese order.

The specialized nature of this book has necessitated the use of a number of Japanese terms peculiar to aikido. Such terms appear italicized initially, and thereafter, in roman type. Japanese terms are defined in the text on first occurrence or in footnotes, and are also included in the index. Final responsibility for the accuracy of translations and editing decisions rests with me.

In addition to the teachers who kindly agreed to be interviewed, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the following individuals who have served as members of the Aiki News staff over the years, and who were present during many of the interviews, or provided translation and interpretation assistance. They include Midori Yamamoto, Larry Bieri, Seiko Mabuchi, Noriko Takase, Hisako Ishida, Yurie Chiba, and especially, Ikuko Kimura. The cover design of this book is the creation of João Tinoco. Further, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of Diane Skoss, who participated in all stages of the preparation of the earlier edition of this work. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Clark Bateman for his assistance with the proofreading of the final manuscript.

Material for a second volume consisting of interviews with many of the postwar students of Morihei Ueshiba, also exists, and time permitting, will see the light of day in a second volume in the near future.

I sincerely hope that this collection of testimonies from many of the most notable historical figures of aikido will provide useful background information on the poorly-understood formative years of the art, and lead to a deeper understanding among Western readers of the extraordinary efforts and creative genius of Morihei Ueshiba.

Stanley Pranin
February 2010

Introduction

by Stanley Pranin

Aikido is one of several Japanese martial arts which have attained international recognition in the years following World War II. It is today only slightly less well-known than karate and judo, which owe their greater popularity, at least partially, to an emphasis on competition. On the other hand, aikido adopts a non-competitive approach that incorporates an ethical system in which a concern for the well-being of the attacker is part of the act of self-defense. This lofty ideal may very well account for part of the attraction aikido seems to hold for its adherents throughout the world.

Developed by Morihei Ueshiba in the 1920s and 30s, aikido's steady growth actually began in the 1950s, following the war, when many new schools were opened throughout Japan, especially in universities and companies. Among those responsible for the postwar popularization of aikido are Gozo Shioda of Yoshinkan Aikido, Koichi Tohei, who later became independent of the Ueshiba school, and Ueshiba's son and successor, Kisshomaru, who was in charge of the main school, known as the Aikikai Hombu Dojo, until his passing in 1999. Scores of technical books have been published on the art, and today more than one thousand schools operate in Japan.

Aikido found its way to the West in the early 1950s, when it was first introduced to France by Minoru Mochizuki, and shortly thereafter, when Koichi Tohei brought the art to the United States. Tohei, in particular, played a major role in the early development of aikido overseas, thanks to his easy-to-understand teaching methods that emphasized the concept of *ki*, the publication of several well-received books, and his frequent overseas instructional tours. The 1960s also saw the dispatch abroad of many young Japanese instructors to the U.S. and Europe, most of whom represented the Aikikai Hombu Dojo, under the supervision of Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba.

During the 1970s, aikido's growth continued unabated, and many national and international organizations were established. Notable among these were the International

Aikido Federation—the administrative branch of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo, and aikido's largest governing body—which was set up in 1976, and its subordinate federations formed in scores of countries around the world. During these years, there was a profusion of political activity in Europe, and France in particular, which has the world's largest aikido population. The emergence of these centralized organizations produced a degree of standardization in instruction and ranking within the various groups, but this came only at the expense of an increase in bureaucratic influence over the art. Not unexpectedly, many smaller groups and schools have broken away from these large federations, in a simultaneous shift toward fragmentation within the aikido world that continues today. Fortunately, this seems not to have stemmed the spread of the art itself, which has continued to expand despite organizational differences.

Sokaku Takeda at about age 45

Beginning in the late 1980s, aikido received even greater exposure due to its portrayal in films, albeit in a spirit unlike that exemplified by its Founder Morihei Ueshiba. The art's balanced emphasis on technique and character development attracts a wide audience that transcends age, status, and cultural boundaries, and the future seems promising. Moreover, aikido, with its emphasis on a harmonious interaction among practitioners, rather than a reliance on physical strength, offers the possibility of training as a lifelong pursuit.

There are today several major styles of aikido, principal among them being the Aikikai, which is the main school founded by Morihei Ueshiba, and currently headed by his grandson, Third Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba; Yoshinkan Aikido, founded by Gozo Shioda, one of Ueshiba's leading prewar students; Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido, originated by Koichi Tohei, which stresses the principle of ki, and also includes a ki-based healing system called *kiatsu*; and Tomiki Aikido (the only mainstream form of aikido to incoporate a system of competition), devised by Kenji Tomiki, a professor of Waseda University.

Historical Overview

The key to an understanding of the formative years in the life of Morihei Ueshiba is an appreciation of the pivotal role played by his father, Yoroku, in guiding and supporting

his son. Yoroku Ueshiba [1843-1920] was a wealthy landowner and long-time member of the village assembly of Tanabe, a seacoast town in Wakayama Prefecture. He was already forty years old and the father of three daughters when Morihei was born on December 14, 1883.

Morihei's frail health caused his father great concern, and Yoroku took pains to guard the delicate condition of his only son and heir, encouraging him to gradually build up his body. As a boy, Morihei attended a temple school, or *terakoya*, where he received his elementary education. He later showed a particular talent for arithmetic and calculations, and was skilled enough to be qualified to teach other children during his teen years.

Morihei dropped out of middle school after his first year, and in 1901, at the age of seventeen, was sent to Tokyo to work in a business operated by his relatives, the Inoue family. Yoroku's plan was to have his son gain the experience necessary to become a successful merchant. However, Morihei showed more interest in practicing Tenjin Shinyo-ryu Jujutsu at night, than in learning the family business. Very little is known about Morihei's earliest formal martial arts training other than that his teacher was Tokusaburo Tozawa [1848-1912], that he studied for less than a year before he fell ill with beriberi, and that he was forced to return to Tanabe.

After recovering from his illness, Morihei began to transform his weak body into a powerful physique through strength-building exercises and stamina training. In 1903, as events leading to the Russo-Japanese War began to unfold, Morihei, swept up in the general patriotic fervor, joined the Wakayama 61st Infantry Regiment as a foot soldier. Once in the army, his aptitude for martial arts manifested itself, particularly in bayonet training. During his time off, Morihei also began to practice Yagyu Shingan-ryu under Masakatsu Nakai in Osaka. There is some uncertainty over whether Ueshiba was actually taught by Nakai, or by Masanosuke Tsuboi, one of Nakai's students. It may have been that the formal name of the tradition was actually Goto-ha Yagyu Shingan-ryu.

Although Morihei was soon sent to Manchuria, it appears he did not actually see front-line action. In all likelihood, this was due to the fact that, in those days, efforts were made to safeguard the lives of first-born sons. Even after his discharge from the army, and return to Tanabe in 1906, he continued his study of Yagyu-ryu on an occasional basis, traveling to Osaka to train. Ueshiba's son, Kisshomaru, has in his possession a Yagyu-ryu transmission scroll from Masakatsu Nakai, but it bears no official stamp. This fact leaves some doubt concerning its authenticity, and the question of the extent of the Founder's study of Yagyu-ryu remains unresolved.

After his discharge, Morihei spent the next few years in Tanabe, where he appears to have spent considerable time in self-training and further honing his martial arts skills. His father sought to channel the energies of his son, who showed no signs of wishing to embark upon a career, by setting up a local judo dojo. A seventeen-year-old instructor from the Kodokan Judo Headquarters, named Kiyoichi Takagi, was brought in to teach the young men of Tanabe. The depth of Morihei's study of judo is unknown, but probably did not last longer than about one year, for at that time, he was studying the possibility of relocating to the undeveloped region of Hokkaido as a settler.

Following a short evaluation trip in 1910, in 1912, Morihei Ueshiba led a group of fifty-four families from Tanabe to the northern part of Hokkaido, where they settled and built the village of Shirataki. Life in this desolate area was severe, due to the harsh Hokkaido winters, and much of the settlers' time was occupied with construction activities and growing their first crops. Later, Morihei sent for his wife and young daughter, and threw himself into the task of fashioning a new life out of the wilderness.

Morihei's Hokkaido years are of particular importance to the later emergence of aikido, since it was during this time that he met and trained under an eccentric, but exceptionally skilled, jujutsu teacher, named Sokaku Takeda. The two met in the town of Engaru in February, 1915, through the introduction of a local newspaperman named Kotaro Yoshida. Morihei left his life in Shirataki in limbo for nearly a month to attend a series of seminars taught by Takeda in Engaru, about a day's ride from his home by horseback.

During this period, Morihei became engrossed in the study of Sokaku's art, called Daito-ryu Jujutsu, and soon persuaded his teacher to move into his home in Shirataki, so he could receive personal instruction. Sokaku is said to have received large sums of money for instructing Morihei, and others from Tanabe, in Daito-ryu. It appears that the considerable sums needed for payments to Sokaku were provided by Morihei's father and Zenzo Inoue, Morihei's wealthy brother-in-law. Yoroku even relocated to Shirataki to be at his son's side, but ultimately abandoned his plan to settle in Hokkaido, when he found the climate and life there too harsh.

Morihei himself, as well as the Ueshiba family, would later attempt to minimize the extent of his study of Daito-ryu, because of the friction which eventually developed between Morihei and Sokaku. However, the historical records preserved in the form of Sokaku's student registers and payment ledgers leave no room for doubt about the extent of Morihei's training. The initial phase of Morihei's study of Daito-ryu took place between February, 1915 and December, 1919, and during this period, his name is entered some eight times; quite a large number of entries compared to Sokaku's other leading students. Morihei Ueshiba was indeed one of the most skilled students of Daito-ryu, and perhaps was even the person to have received the most direct instruction from Takeda.

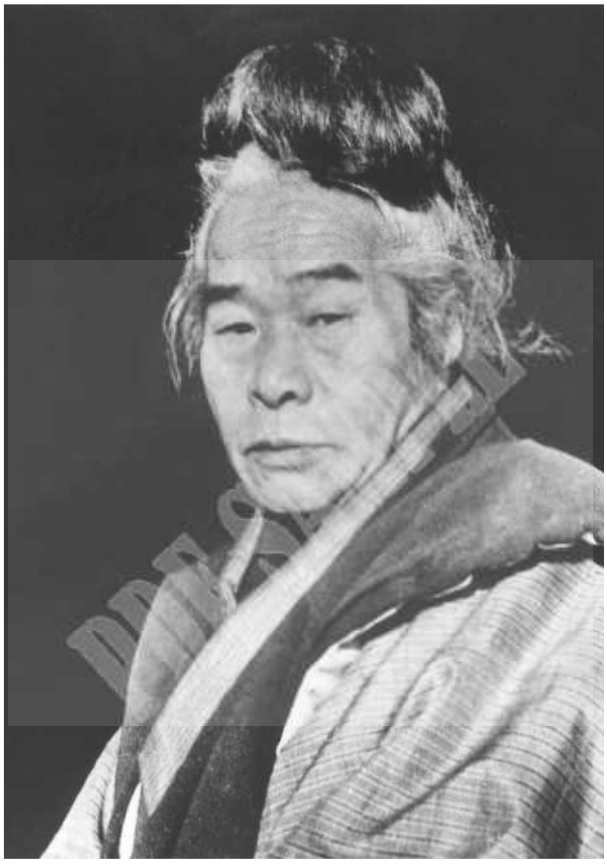
In December, 1919, Morihei's life changed suddenly when he received a telegram informing him that his father in Tanabe was seriously ill. He hastily departed Shirataki, and left his home and most of his possessions to Sokaku. Morihei's wife, Hatsu, who was then expecting, had earlier left Hokkaido for Tanabe. The fact that Morihei left Hokkaido so precipitously, even under such understandable circumstances, suggests that a rift had already developed in his relationship with Sokaku Takeda, and this seems to have cemented Morihei's decision not to return.

In any event, while hurrying back to be at his dying father's side, Morihei was sidetracked by reports of a charismatic spiritual teacher named Onisaburo Deguchi, the guiding light of the Omoto religious sect centered in Ayabe, near Kyoto. The impulsive Morihei decided, on the spot, to detour to meet Onisaburo, and to seek prayers for his father's recovery. This meeting with Onisaburo left a lasting impression on Morihei, and even though Yoroku had already passed away when he arrived belatedly in Tanabe, he soon decided to relocate his

family to Ayabe to seek inner peace in a religious life.

The nature and depth of Onisaburo's teachings transformed Morihei's spiritual beliefs, and served as the basis for the ethical vision which would later infuse aikido. Morihei Ueshiba's spiritual apprenticeship to Onisaburo Deguchi would prove at least as significant as his study of Daito-ryu in the development of modern aikido.

Morihei's stay in Ayabe as a member of the Omoto religion lasted seven years. Deguchi quickly recognized Morihei's outstanding abilities as a martial artist, and encouraged him to continue his training and provide instruction to members of the sect. Accordingly, Morihei set up a small dojo in his home, dubbed the "Ueshiba Juku," and engaged in a life of training, farming, and ascetic practices.



Portrait of Onisaburo Deguchi, c. 1935

In 1922, Sokaku arrived in Ayabe with his family—apparently uninvited—for a half-year stay in Ueshiba's home. Takeda taught Morihei and members of the Omoto sect, but proved to be an unwanted guest, with Onisaburo openly disapproving of his presence. Upon his departure from Ayabe, Sokaku awarded Morihei a teacher's certificate [*kyoju dairi*], which stipulated that the latter would henceforth pay a specific sum to Takeda for each new student he taught.

Having become a member of Onisaburo's intimate circle, in early 1924, Morihei was one of a few selected companions to secretly accompany Deguchi to Mongolia in a somewhat bizarre attempt to set up a utopian colony there. Onisaburo's party became enmeshed in local politics, and was arrested and sentenced to death. They were saved from the firing squad only at the last moment, due to the intervention of the Japanese authorities. This narrow scrape with death had a profound effect on Morihei. Following the party's return to Japan, which was the focus of intense media attention, Morihei resumed his life of more simple pursuits in Ayabe.

Among those Omoto believers who trained in Ueshiba's private dojo were several naval officers, including Vice-Admiral Seikyo Asano. Asano spoke enthusiastically of Ueshiba's exceptional skills to his fellow officer, Admiral Isamu Takeshita, who was also a martial

arts enthusiast. Takeshita journeyed to Ayabe from Tokyo in 1925, especially to witness a demonstration by Ueshiba, and left duly impressed. This led to Morihei giving a series of demonstrations and seminars in Tokyo over the next two years, after which, with Onisaburo's blessing, he moved his family to the capital. It was Admiral Takeshita who paved the way for the Founder in Tokyo, providing important introductions, and gathering government and private support for Ueshiba's activities. It is difficult to imagine the Founder having succeeded in Tokyo on such a wide scale without the assistance of Takeshita.

From 1927 to 1931, Ueshiba taught in various private residences, where his students consisted mainly of persons of high social standing, and his following increased steadily. Finally, sufficient financial support was gathered to open a permanent dojo in April, 1931, in the Ushigome district of Shinjuku Ward in Tokyo. The dojo, known as the Kobukan, served as the base for Ueshiba's teaching activities, and it was at this dojo that many young *uchideshi*, or live-in students, underwent training to become instructors.

At the same time the Kobukan Dojo was functioning as the hub of Morihei Ueshiba's activities in the Tokyo area, an organization called the Budo Senyokai was created in 1932 at the initiative of Onisaburo Deguchi. Its purpose was to promote Ueshiba's martial art on a national scale, using the extensive network of Omoto branches that was already in place. This act on the part of Reverend Deguchi is a clear indication of the high regard he held for Ueshiba, and also provides convincing evidence of the strong link which continued to exist between the Founder and the Omoto religion through the mid-1930s.

The so-called Second Omoto Incident of December, 1935 resulted in the suppression of the Omoto religion yet a second time. Ueshiba himself barely managed to escape arrest. From that time on, it was necessary for him to maintain a distance from the activities of the Omoto sect, particularly because of his own role as a martial arts instructor at various military institutions, such as the Army College, the Naval Academy, and the Toyama and Nakano military schools.

In 1937, Japan entered into war with China, and the nation's intensified wartime efforts thinned the ranks of the Kobukan Dojo. One by one, the older uchideshi and newer students entered military service. Two important postwar figures, Koichi Tohei and Kisaburo Osawa, did however enroll around this time. At the outbreak of the Pacific War, there were few students at the Ueshiba Dojo, and much of the Founder's energies were consumed with teaching at various military institutions.

By 1942, air raids carried out by American bombers began to cause devastation in Japan's major cities, and life in Tokyo was severely disrupted. Also about this time, the Founder's health started to deteriorate, and this and other factors played a role in Ueshiba's somewhat surprising decision to leave Tokyo. In any event, this same year, Ueshiba turned over management of the Kobukan Dojo to his son Kisshomaru, then a student at Waseda University, and retired to his country home in Iwama, Ibaragi Prefecture, to pursue a life of training, farming, and introspection.

The Founder spent most of the next twelve or so years in Iwama, free from the distractions of the city, continuing to perfect his technique and probe new spiritual depths. It was during the Iwama years that Ueshiba formulated the concept of *Takemusu Aiki*, representing aikido's

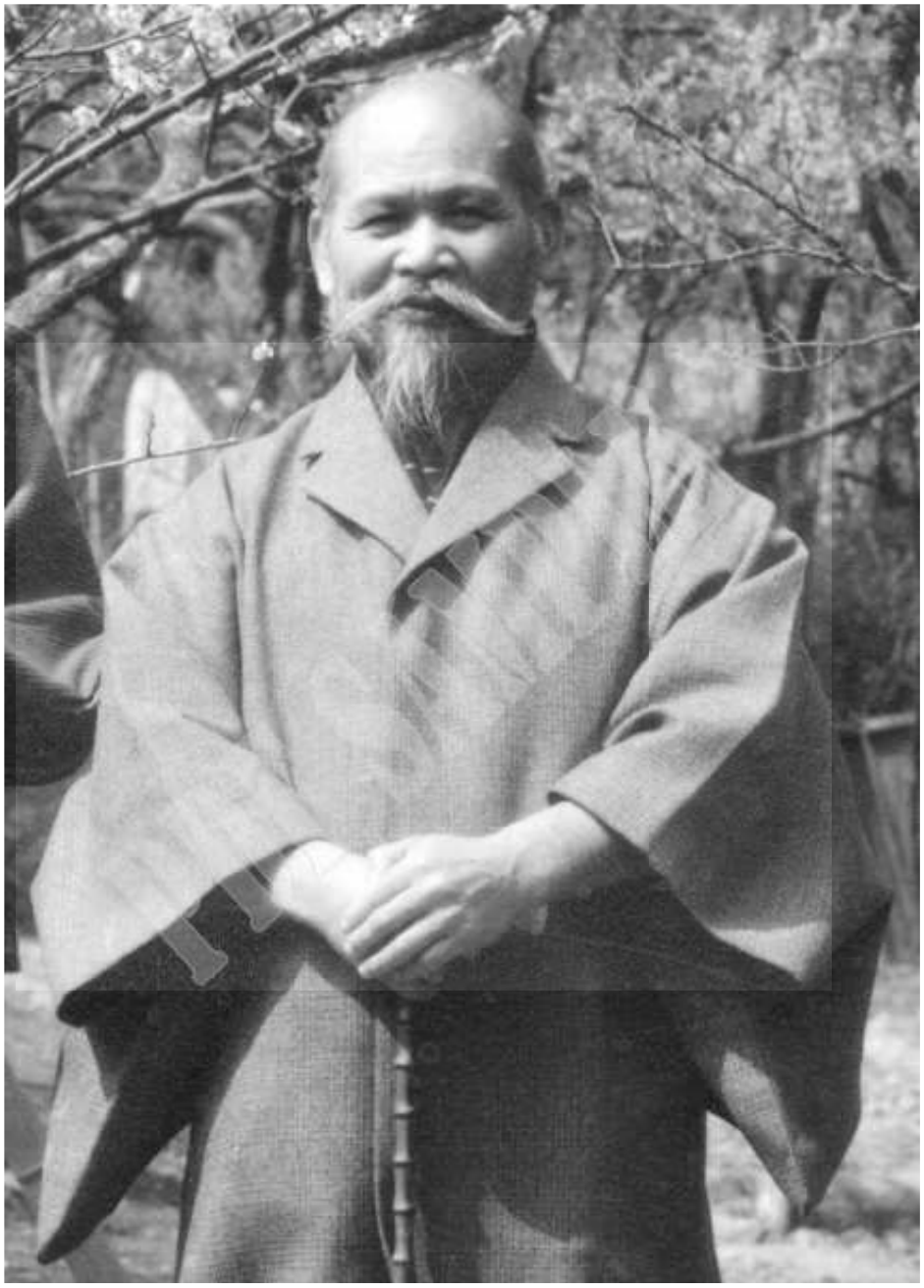
highest level of mastery. Takemusu Aiki represents a state in which techniques pour forth spontaneously in a manner appropriate to any circumstance. This ideal is closely linked to the birth of modern aikido, which according to Ueshiba, took place during his residence in Iwama.

Founder demonstrating the jo in Tokyo, 1967

Aikido's revival and spread after World War II gained momentum beginning in the 1950s, largely due to the efforts of prewar students, Gozo Shioda, Koichi Tohei, and the Founder's son, Kisshomaru. Morihei Ueshiba was already in his early seventies when he began venturing out from Iwama, and spending much of his time in Tokyo, and on his frequent travels to the Kansai region. The administration of the Tokyo Hombu Dojo and its technical curriculum was in the hands primarily of Kisshomaru and Koichi Tohei. The charismatic Tohei was, through the early 1970s, actually aikido's best known figure, especially outside of Japan. Although the Founder would appear in the dojo to teach and lecture whenever the inspiration struck him, his role in the postwar spread of aikido was largely a symbolic one.

Ueshiba's final years saw the gradual decline of his health, and the filmed demonstrations preserved from this period show the Founder executing mainly large, flowing techniques, often without even touching his attacker. Some are of the opinion that Ueshiba's technique was at its highest level at the end of his life, while others maintain that he was in his prime during the Kobukan Dojo period, or during the Iwama years, shortly after the end of the war.

Morihei Ueshiba's death from liver cancer at the age of eighty-five came on April 26, 1969. He was succeeded by his son, Kisshomaru, who became the Second Aikido Doshu. Following Kisshomaru's death in January, 1999, his son, Moriteru, took over as Aikido's Third Doshu, following in his father's footsteps.



Inoue at about age 65

Yoichiro Inoue

[also Noriaki, Hoken]
Born in Tanabe, Wakayama Prefecture, 1902-1994
Founder, Shinei Taido

Yoichiro (Noriaki) Inoue is a nephew of Morihei Ueshiba and was raised for several years in the Ueshiba household, first in Tanabe and later in Shirataki, Hokkaido. Most of Inoue's martial arts training experience was gained under the tutelage of Ueshiba while in Hokkaido, Ayabe, and Tokyo. Inoue was active in Tokyo as an assistant instructor under Ueshiba beginning in the mid-1920s, continuing through the establishment of the Kobukan Dojo in 1931. Later, from 1932 to 1935, he was a senior instructor for the Budo Senyokai, which was based in Kameoka; Inoue also taught Aiki Budo extensively at various locations in Osaka.

Inoue distanced himself from Ueshiba following the events of the Second Omoto Incident and they met infrequently thereafter. He taught independently after the war in Tokyo, at first calling his art Aiki Budo. He later changed the name to Shinwa Taido, and then, finally, to Shinei Taido. Inoue passed away in April 1994 remaining active teaching until shortly before his passing.

Editor: One of the main purposes of our work is to collect and preserve various historical documents concerning aikido. One gets the impression from current books about aikido that some historically important people are being intentionally ignored. If this situation continues, the things you have accomplished may be forgotten or distorted.

Inoue Sensei: You don't even need to mention it. What I have done has already been distorted and misunderstood. I taught almost all of the current aikido old-timers directly. Ueshiba and I alone taught. So it is not a question of misunderstanding, but an intentional distortion of the story. I am not at all afraid of being misunderstood. I have told you that before. I said, "When you come to see me, bring the strongest aikidoka, the old aikido people. Then I will tell you anything."

Even now I am supporting aikido. When aikido people come to practice, I tell them not to train with us because the style is different. It is difficult to enter my dojo to practice because our office head is quite strict. However, when I heard that you telephoned me so many times, I felt sorry for you. I found out that you have been living in Japan for many years, publishing news about aikido and working hard to learn more. Therefore, I thought I would see you once and have a relaxed conversation and tell you some things frankly. That's the kind of person I am. I hate putting on airs or telling lies. If someone lies they are sure to be caught. This is why we had you come here.

Actually someone from the *New York Times* visited me recently, but I can't remember his name. I was asked by the Wakamatsu-cho Dojo[1] to talk with him. I told him it would be better to talk to Kisshomaru[2] or his elder sister. I added that if he really wanted to get important information he should go to the headquarters of the Omoto religion.[3] He telephoned me about three times. This gentleman from the *New York Times* had some acquaintance who was connected with a Christian religion, and he came with an introduction from this person to the Omoto Headquarters where I met him for the first time. I told him then that if he was going to write the truth I would talk to him, but that I would refuse if he was going to record falsehoods. Then when I told him about Ueshiba, he was really surprised. Perhaps if he wrote what I told him the book wouldn't do well. I thought that if he were really a journalist working for the *New York Times* he would not have asked certain questions. Since I had the impression he was not sincere, I changed my attitude towards him completely. I told him that and he has not contacted me since.

I imagine there is no one left who knows about the old days. Most of the people who knew about those times have already passed away. I am eighty-five years old. I have arrived at where I now stand after beginning my studies when I was thirteen.

Actually, I can talk forever. Since I remember everything, one day is not enough to finish my story. I remember these things because I had to learn both the philosophy of affinity[4] and military tactics. When I was a child I studied these subjects all day long at school. Therefore I know myself, even my shortcomings. I remember all events clearly from the age of five. I'm ashamed to say it, but I was a weak-minded child. I thought I had to improve my condition and remember everything to try to change myself.

I was able to finish editing the transcript this soon because Unagami Sensei took great pains to help me. Fortunately, she does editing work and was a great help. Without her

assistance, perhaps I would not have returned this manuscript to you. I might have said I didn't want to! I did not speak out because I wanted my words to be published in a magazine. I am not fond of talking about other people. I always tell my students not to lie but to tell the truth. Otherwise, someday we will be caught by our lies. Therefore, I am always strict about these things. I don't like to criticize the dead. There are no other witnesses. If there were any, then I wouldn't hesitate to write about any subject. I would debate any great master. I don't want to embarrass anyone who is dead, even my uncle [Morihei Ueshiba].

Inoue c. 1932 with Yoshitaka Hirota

To begin with, would you tell us about your early years?

I was born in Wakayama Prefecture in 1902 and raised there. Morihei Ueshiba's father, Yoroku, who was my grandfather, was a fine, kind-hearted man. He used to employ many people. Ueshiba's parents were very charitable. They had their own paddy field [in Tanabe] and early one morning they found a dead baby there. They felt sorry for the baby and took it home and buried it. In those days they had not yet had any children, but soon after that Ueshiba's mother had my mother. My mother [Tame] told me this story many times. She would often scold me when I said to her, "Oh, I see. You are the reincarnation of the baby!"

My mother married into our family from the Ueshiba house. She was the eldest Ueshiba daughter. Morihei was the fourth child. There were five children and Morihei was the only son. There was not much difference in our ages [eighteen years] even though we spoke to each other as uncle and nephew. We studied in the same way. Ueshiba quit middle school when he was in the first or second year and went to work in our store in Tokyo. I think he continued his schooling there. I believe that since he had time at night he went to a nearby judo dojo for practice.

I believe Ueshiba Sensei later practiced Yagyu Shingan-ryu[5] in Sakai City in Osaka while he was in the army and for a time after that.

That's right. Ueshiba liked martial arts, so he went everywhere.

After Ueshiba Sensei was discharged from the army, I understand that he returned to Tanabe, but continued his training in the Yagyu School. It must have taken a long time to travel to Sakai from Tanabe in those days.

Yes, but there was a ship. It wasn't that hard to go there because there was also a road.

Did Ueshiba Sensei go to train often?

Sometimes he would stay overnight. I guess he practiced a little Yagyu-ryu.

Did you ever go with him?

No, I didn't. I didn't think I needed to practice Yagyu Shingan-ryu. My uncle liked martial arts very much. He went out to practice but never told his parents. People, including my father, thought they had to do something about him and [later] sent him to Hokkaido, saying that if he wanted to work he should do something grand. If he needed money, he should take it with him.

Sometime before he went to Hokkaido, I believe Ueshiba Sensei practiced judo.

I had an older brother and, while we were living in Tanabe, my uncle, my brother and I studied old-style judo. I was only about ten years old at that time.

Was Kiyoichi Takagi[6] your judo teacher?

Yes, yes. He was still young then. They needed a teacher in Tanabe so Mr. Takagi was invited. You know a lot about it! Is he still alive?

No, but his wife is. In what year did you and Ueshiba Sensei learn judo?

It was around 1911, when I was still a boy. My grandfather Yoroku was a strict person and he thought that judo would be good for us since it was a sport. He considered it to be a good amusement for boys, so he asked the Kodokan[7] to send someone to him. Mr. Takagi came to Tanabe as a result of this request. First, he came to our house, and I think he stayed with us for about two years. We took care of him, but suddenly he returned home. Ueshiba, too, had various chores to do and didn't have time to practice judo all the time. Then my uncle had to leave for Hokkaido.

Many years later, when we were practicing in the dojo in Sengakuji in Tokyo a man came to the dojo. He came up to me and said, "It's been a long time, Bo-chan." I asked him who he was and he said he was Takagi. I had forgotten about him! I suggested that he should practice with us but Takagi Sensei responded, "Oh, no. If I were thrown by people like you I would not be able to survive." I told him not to joke around like that and we laughed! He had brought a team of young judo students from the Kodokan with him on that occasion. There were also people like Admiral Takeshita,[8] Kosaburo Gejo[9] of Yagyu Shinkage-ryu and various others watching practice. Mr. Takagi observed the class very intently. When I told him he should practice with us, since it had been a long time, he laughed and replied that the times had changed. Those were the good old days!

How was it that you went to Hokkaido?

When I was in the fifth grade of elementary school, I went on strike! My teachers had a hard time handling me. My father thought I was unmanageable and sent me to Hokkaido to let me run loose. I would not have gone otherwise. I became well-behaved after I went to Hokkaido.

Did you go there by yourself?

Ueshiba's parents went with me.

We understand that Morihei Ueshiba Sensei first met his Daito-ryu Jujutsu teacher Sokaku Takeda in Engaru[10] in February, 1915.

It happened when I was thirteen. My uncle, Takeda Sensei, myself, and several others met in the reception room of the Hisada Inn. It was there I first found out about Daito-ryu Jujutsu.

I understand it was Kotaro Yoshida who introduced Sokaku Takeda to Ueshiba Sensei?

I'm not sure since there were several people there and I didn't know who Mr. Yoshida was.

Please tell us more about this episode.

Since I was young I just watched the training. Usually they didn't allow other people to observe their practice, and you had to pay even if you were only watching. That's how secretive Takeda Sensei was in his teaching. He never showed his techniques. If someone came to watch, he would take him and throw him out; therefore, there were absolutely no peek holes in the dojo. I don't think Sokaku Sensei could have made a living without having at least ten students.

One was not allowed to sit cross-legged while observing. I am now sitting cross-legged here with you, but in those days I would sit in *seiza* [formal position] wearing a hakama [pleated skirt]. I thought while I watched the lesson that this martial art school was different, and I didn't want to learn it. When I met Takeda Sensei and he told me to practice with him, I refused, saying I didn't like his type of training.

He said to me, "Little boy, do you want to practice with me?" I answered, "I don't want to be taught by an old man like you!" But he didn't get angry with me. He said, "Oh, I see. Do I look that old?" "You are an old man without any teeth," I replied. Takeda Sensei really wanted to teach me. I preferred to be taught by people I could trust, even if they were not that good. When I looked at his face and heard his way of talking, I felt that he wouldn't be good for me. So I didn't study with him after all.

That first time they practiced for about ten days at the inn. I suggested to my uncle that we should return to Shirataki[11] soon. I thought it would be cruel to my aunt [Hatsu, Morihei's wife] if we stayed on. I took him home and we practiced together. I practiced with my uncle quite often, starting from the age of twelve or thirteen, and made various comments. From my point of view, my uncle really applied himself to the study of the art. This is why he took all the trouble to go to the Hisada Inn in Engaru to study. It takes quite a long time to go to Engaru from Shirataki.

Kenji Tomiki at about age seventy-five

Kenji Tomiki

Born in Kakunodate, Akita Prefecture, 1900-1979
Founder, Tomiki aikido
Eighth dan, judo

Kenji Tomiki began studying judo at the age of ten. He entered Waseda University becoming a leading member of the judo club and quickly advanced to fourth dan. Tomiki was first taught Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu by Morihei Ueshiba in 1926, and trained under the Founder both in Tokyo and Ayabe during the late 1920s.

Tomiki continued Aikijujutsu training at the Kobukan Dojo in the 1930s during school vacations while working as a middle school teacher in Akita Prefecture. In March, 1936, he moved to Manchuria where he taught students at the Daido Gakuin and Kenkoku University, and the Japanese military police. He was awarded the first aikido eighth dan by Morihei Ueshiba in 1940. Trapped in Manchuria at the end of World War II, Tomiki was imprisoned in the Soviet Union for three years before being repatriated to Japan.

In 1949, Tomiki joined the faculty of Waseda University where he taught judo and later aikido. He also remained active at the Kodokan Judo Headquarters, and taught at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo in Shinjuku during the early 1950s. Tomiki devised a system of competitive aikido sometimes referred to as "Aikido Kyogi" [Competitive Aikido], and formed an organization in 1974 called the Japan Aikido Association to further his theories on aikido as a sport. Upon his death in 1979, Tomiki was succeeded by his long-time associate, Hideo Oba, who continued as JAA chairman until his passing in 1986. The JAA continues today with strong bases at Tomiki's alma mater, Waseda University, and at the Shodokan Dojo in Osaka under Tetsuro Nariyama.

Sensei, I believe you practiced judo before you met Morihei Ueshiba Sensei and were greatly influenced by Jigoro Kano Sensei, the Founder of judo.[1]

Tomiki Sensei: Yes. I first began to practice judo when I was about ten years old. Later, I came to Tokyo to enter Waseda University. But it wasn't until I became one of the leaders of the university judo club that I first got to know Jigoro Kano Sensei, the Founder of Kodokan judo. I met him in 1920.

Kano Sensei came to Tokyo when he was fourteen years old and studied English diligently. He was a member of the second graduating class of the school which is now Tokyo University. This school is famous as the top educational institution in the country, and it attracts the very best talent.

Japan had just cast off its Edo-era isolationist national policy and was clearly trailing behind Western nations. The government recognized that it was necessary to quickly strengthen the country and to learn modern science. As a result, famous professors from America, France, Germany, and other countries were invited to lecture on their specialties, not in Japanese as is done today, but in their own languages. For this reason, Japanese students from that early part of the Meiji period were able to speak all three of these major languages.

At that time, the person who most influenced Kano Sensei was an American from Harvard University, Professor Ernest Fenellosa.[2] Fenellosa was a man whose influence was widely felt throughout Japanese culture. Though a lecturer in economics, he also had a deep knowledge of art and esthetics. One student in the first class at Tokyo University, the famous Tenshin Okakura—you may have heard of him—was Professor Fenellosa's great pet. Okakura was outstanding in foreign languages.[3] Later, he worked for the Ministry of Education in connection with fine arts education, and eventually founded the institution that grew into the present-day Tokyo Fine Arts University. At that time, however, Western things were held in much higher esteem, and were judged to be of more value than things Japanese. It was simply the tenor of the times.

Fenellosa, on the other hand, continually said that there were also outstanding arts in the oriental tradition. He bemoaned to his students in the strongest terms the sad loss of the good points of their oriental culture and the best of its spiritual traditions, a trend that was in full swing at that time.

At the same time, with the abolition of the samurai system and the consequent loss of jobs, many former samurai were unable to feed themselves. So Kano Sensei, while a Tokyo University student, scoured the entire city in search of jujutsu teachers. He found the Tenjin Shinyo-ryu teacher, Hachinosuke Masayoshi Fukuda Sensei, and Tsunetoshi Iikubo Sensei of the Kito-ryu, and during his student years, he studied these two martial traditions. After graduation, in 1882, he founded the Kodokan. Since he was born in 1860, he was about twenty-two at that time. He was of the same generation as Ueshiba Sensei's teacher Sokaku Takeda Sensei.

Though Kano Sensei certainly modernized jujutsu techniques, in keeping with the times, he also reevaluated their purpose as martial arts. The change centered on the fact that in the past the main function of martial arts was a practical one, whether it was a question of a conflict between two individuals or two warring countries. In modern times, however,

Demonstrating at Shimbuden Dojo in Manchuria, 1942

training is not for the sake of fighting, but rather in order to get to know people better, to become friends. You could even call it the "Coubertin principle."[4]

Kano Sensei died in May 1938 while sailing home across the Pacific Ocean. The last time I met him was two years earlier, in 1936, at the Kodokan. He knew that I had been researching aikido and encouraged me saying, "Though it must be difficult for you, please continue to study aikido as thoroughly as you can."

Kano Sensei must have been supportive of Ueshiba Sensei's research into martial arts.

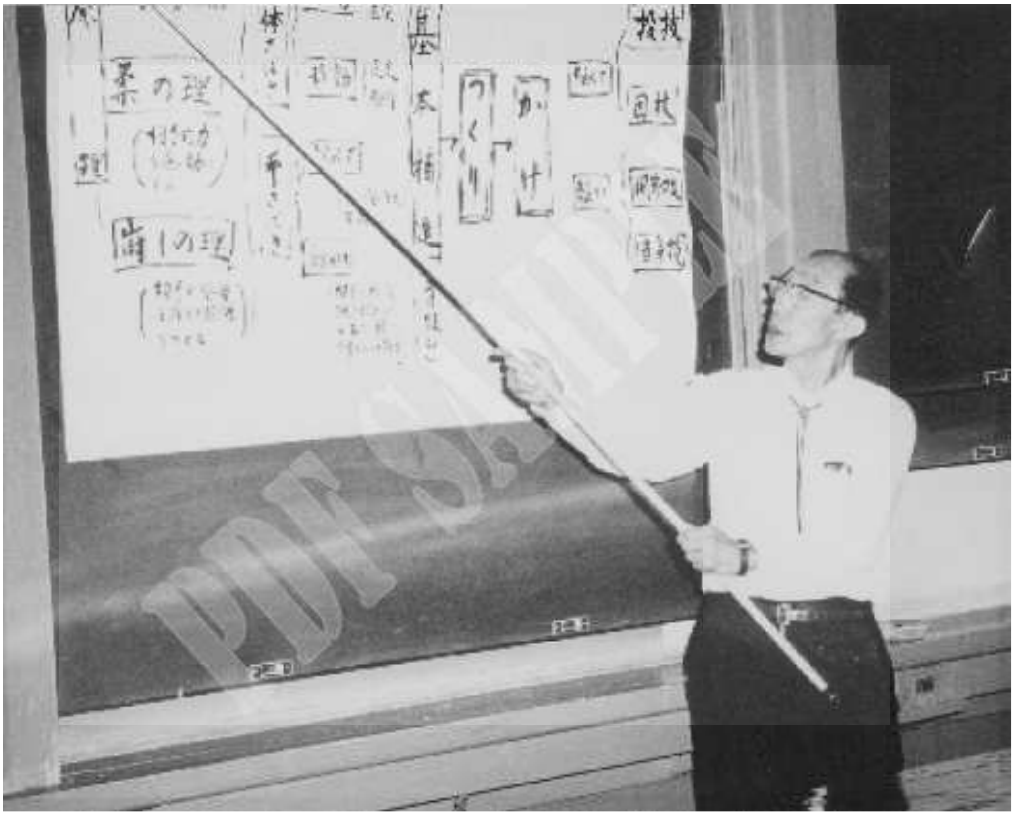
Kano Sensei did, after all, follow the same route as Ueshiba Sensei, who became a believer in the Omoto religion and resolved the problem of creating a "budo of peace" through spiritual means. There were several martial artists like this in history. In the Meiji period though, I think that the emergence of a man of the caliber of Ueshiba Sensei was truly the exception to the rule. It is significant that, in those violent, warlike times before the Meiji period, such a man did not appear.

The concept of the sword and Zen and their extremely intimate relationship has a long history. As exemplified in expressions such as *Ken Zen isshin* [unity of the sword and Zen], the relationship of the sword and Zen has been discussed endlessly by those who philosophize about the budo of Japan. I think it is extremely difficult to explain such a concept theoretically. You should read Daisetz Suzuki's book *Zen and Japanese Culture* to understand this subject better. Suzuki Sensei was also an expert in English.

Earlier, you mentioned Sokaku Takeda, the Daito-ryu Jujutsu instructor who was one of Ueshiba Sensei's first teachers. What sort of person was he?

This would be a good moment for me to talk about the history of Sokaku Takeda. Just

before the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan's domestic political scene was divided into two factions, the Imperial forces on one side, and the old Tokugawa government on the other. Eventually, the Emperor's side emerged victorious, and we have heard the famous story of that group of fifteen- and sixteen-year olds called the Byakkotai,[5] who committed *seppuku* [ritual suicide] since they had supported the defeated Tokugawa forces. Had young Sokaku Takeda, then nine years old, been five years older, he too would have had to commit ritual suicide along with the others from his clan.



Conducting lecture on martial arts theory, c. 1975

Anyway, Takeda Sensei had been practicing Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu, an art which had long been handed down in the Aizu clan, from the time he was a child. Moreover, at that time swords were popular and he had learned kenjutsu as well. As the feudal period was drawing to a close, he was the *uchideshi* [live-in student] of one of the most famous masters of kenjutsu of that period, Kenkichi Sakakibara.[6]

In the old days, people hid their techniques behind the closed doors of their own households, and it wasn't until 1898 that some were first revealed to the public. And, by any standards, the northeastern region of the country was particularly rich in martial arts. On top of that, the area had an abundance of people at the instructor level and also many

wealthy people. Therefore, a teacher would often go some place and stay with some rich sponsor for two weeks out of a month and teach. In 1910, the then Akita Prefectural police chief [Sanehide Takarabe] was transferred to the northern island of Hokkaido and Takeda Sensei was among his entourage. They went to Abashiri, a place very far to the north. This is where Ueshiba Sensei comes in.

Ueshiba Sensei moved from his native town up to Hokkaido a year or two later, I believe.

Yes. Ueshiba Sensei had come from the southern prefecture of Wakayama (then known as Kishu), Tanabe City to be exact, and went to Shirataki village in Hokkaido as a settler in 1912. It may be only a digression, but one person, Kodo Horikawa,[7] who is now eighty years old, studied longer under Takeda Sensei than Ueshiba Sensei.

Ueshiba Sensei, like Kano Sensei, had learned the Kito-ryu jujutsu system.[8] He also loved sumo wrestling. During the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, he was called up to military service, but because of his size he was never sent into battle. His body may have been small, but he had splendid talent; no mistake about it. Even in a large group of students, he stood out unmistakably.

In 1919, Ueshiba Sensei's father became gravely ill back at their home town in Wakayama and was on his death bed. As soon as Ueshiba Sensei received the news, he took a train from Hokkaido back toward home, but while on the way he heard of the religious leader Onisaburo Deguchi, and made a detour to the headquarters of the Omoto religion in Ayabe. Then from there, he made his way back to Wakayama. It seems, however, that his father had already breathed his last. After that, he returned to Ayabe where Deguchi's Omoto religion was centered. Today, they have large establishments in both Ayabe and Kameoka.

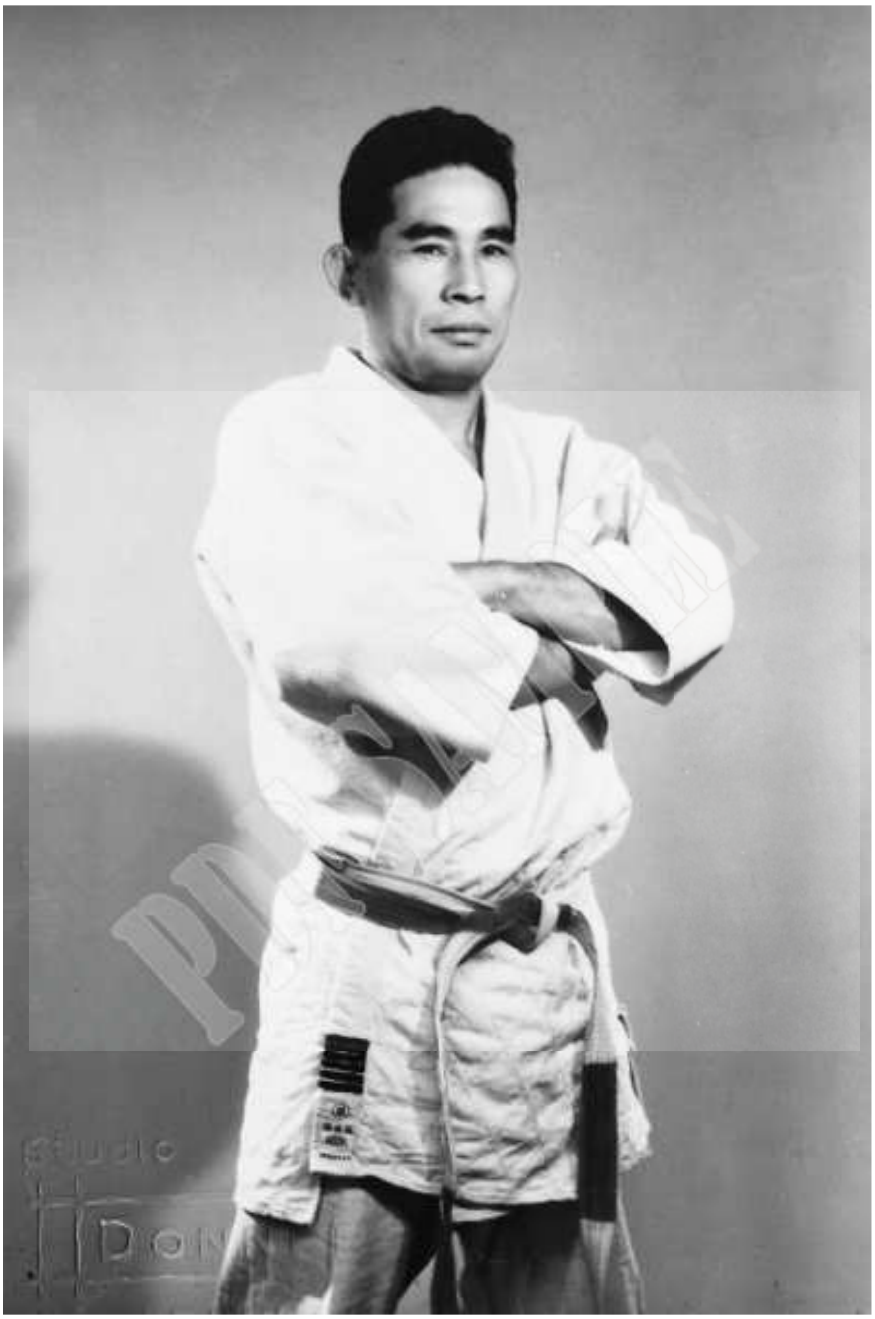
Anyway, Deguchi Sensei was a man of burning faith; his life was a religious pilgrimage. He had tried the Kurozumi sect and Konkokyo, but in the end, he settled on the Omoto religion.

In 1969 a Japanese-language book titled *The Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba* was published by Kanemoto Sunadomari. That book portrays the creation of aikido in a religious light, and talks about the great influence of the Omoto religion on Ueshiba Sensei. What were the respective roles of the Omoto religion and Sokaku Takeda in the development of aikido?

Though I can't really say much about how Ueshiba Sensei developed from the technical standpoint, I believe we can say that he underwent a great spiritual transformation due to his involvement with the Omoto religion. This has to do with the character of Sokaku Takeda and his relationship to Ueshiba Sensei.

Takeda Sensei seems to have been a very severe teacher.

Takeda Sensei was a martial artist in the old sense. When he saw a person, he saw an enemy. If I were to try to give an example, I would say that if a person happened to come to visit him, he would "greet" him by instantly grabbing the steel chopsticks from the brazier



Minoru Mochizuki in France, c. 1953

Minoru Mochizuki

Born in Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture, 1907-2003
Founder, Yoseikan Budo
Tenth dan, aikido, IMAF
Seventh dan, judo
Fourth dan, karate

Minoru Mochizuki began his martial arts training as a boy, practicing both judo and kendo. He progressed rapidly, and in 1925, entered the Kodokan, where he became a top-level judo competitor. Under the tutelage of Jigoro Kano, Mochizuki became a member of the Kobudo Kenkyukai, an organization established within the Kodokan for the study of classical martial arts, where he practiced Katori Shinto-ryu. Later, in 1930, he was sent by Kano to study Aikijujutsu under Morihei Ueshiba. Mochizuki became an uchideshi at the Kobukan Dojo for a short time, following which he opened his own dojo in Shizuoka City in November, 1931.

Later, Mochizuki spent eight years in Mongolia, where he engaged in training in karate. In 1951, he traveled to France to teach judo and also aikido, and was the first to spread the latter art in Europe. Mochizuki is the originator of a composite martial system called Yoseikan Budo, which includes elements of judo, aikido, karate, and kobudo. In 1978, he authored a book entitled Nihonden Jujutsu. *Mochizuki was awarded a tenth dan in aikido by the International Martial Arts Federation. He remained active into his 90s, and passed away in France in 2003.*

Editor: Mochizuki Sensei, I believe that the first martial art you studied was judo.

Mochizuki Sensei: Yes, that's right. I started the year before I entered elementary school. But in the fifth grade we moved, and I had to stop training. Across the street and one house up from our new place, there was a kendo dojo, and so I started to do that instead. Then, in middle school I took up judo again, and I have been at it ever since. I wanted to specialize in judo, and so I enrolled at the Kodokan. The year before, however, I had entered the dojo of one of the Kodokan teachers whose name was Sanpo Toku. In those days in judo circles, people would say, "For technique it's Mifune, but the devil of the Kodokan is Sanpo Toku." He was a very powerful and scary teacher. His dojo was located in a place called Komatsugawa. At that time, I was living with my sister whose home was nearby. I trained for about six months before we moved again, and I entered the Kodokan to become a judoka.

I entered Sanpo Toku Sensei's dojo in 1924. During the time I was studying judo with "Devil" Sanpo Toku, I also practiced an old-style jujutsu art called Gyokushin-ryu Jujutsu. This system used a lot of sacrifice techniques and others that were very similar to those of aikido. At that time, the Gyokushin-ryu teacher, Sanjuro Oshima, lived very near my sister. This teacher was quite saddened to see the classical styles of jujutsu disappearing one by one, and was determined to see to it that his own art was preserved—so much so that he requested that I learn it from him. I would go to his house and would be treated to a fine meal. I didn't have to pay any fees to study, and they actually gave me dinner. That was how I came to study jujutsu.

Were you awarded some kind of rank in this art?

After about six months, I received a license called the *shoden kirigami mokuroku*, which would be roughly equal to a first-degree black belt in judo. That was the end of my relationship with that teacher, but to this day I still remember his words: "The name of our tradition is the Gyokushin-ryu. The name is written with characters meaning spherical spirit. A ball will roll freely. No matter which side it is pushed from it will roll away. Just this sort of spirit is the true spirit that Gyokushin-ryu seeks to instill in its members. If you have done this, nothing in this world can upset you." At that time I was still a child, and so I didn't understand very well what he meant. I simply imagined a heart or spirit rolling here and there. It wasn't until I became fifty years old that I came to understand what the Gyokushin spherical spirit really meant. It takes fifty years of training to be able to understand it. I had forgotten about it for many years.

What other martial arts did you practice?

I also practiced kendo. I've forgotten the name of my teacher, but I don't think I'll ever forget the things he said. He once told me this. "When I was thirteen years old, I took part in the famous Battle of Ueno.[1] Look at yourself! You're twelve, aren't you? How do you expect, as weak as you are, to be able to pick up your sword next year?" That's the sort of teacher I had for kendo.

Then, in May 1926, I joined the Kodokan, and in June, I was officially promoted to

Opening of Mochizuki's Shizuoka Dojo in 1931. Seated middle right to left: Admiral Takeshita, Morihei Ueshiba, Minoru Mochizuki, and Harunosuke Enomoto

first dan. This was because whenever I entered any competition, I would beat the black belts who came up against me. But I think I had been more than black belt material for a long time before I received the grading. That's why I was promoted to second dan the very next January, only a half a year later. The year after that, I was made a third dan. I guess I must have been about as strong as most third dans during the time I was nidan. After all, I had been doing judo since before I started grade school.

What was judo training at the Kodokan like?

About that time, one of my sisters was living in the town of Tsurumi in Kanagawa Prefecture, and she was also kind enough to let me live with her. Every day, I would ride the train up to the Kodokan in Tokyo to practice. Then came the special winter training sessions called *kangeiko*.[2] We were supposed to practice every morning starting at 4 am, and this was to continue for one whole month. Of course, there were no trains running at that early hour so, the only thing I could do was to walk to the dojo. It was quite a distance from the house in Tsurumi to the Kodokan, so I had to leave at midnight to make it on time. There

I was, clacking along the old Tokaido highway in my heavy wooden clogs. As I got nearer to the Kodokan, I would start to meet others, their black belts over their shoulders, diligently on their way from other places. Some of them would be in front of me and likely to beat me there. Well, I had been on the road since midnight, and I wasn't about to let them beat me at that point, so I'd start to run. When they saw me on the run, they would start running too!

Anyway, I ended up walking and running the whole way, and by the time I made it to the Kodokan, I would be dripping with sweat. There was a small well there, but the top was always frozen over. I would smash the ice and splash water over my body from head to toe, and then run into the dojo to practice. Well, one day when I got to the well, my usual bucket was missing. Someone must have carried it off someplace. I didn't have a lot of time to spend looking for it, or I would have been late for the start of class, so I just jumped right into the well for a few seconds. When I went to pull myself back up out of the hole, I felt someone pulling me up by the hand. I turned around to thank the person for helping me and who do you suppose it was? Mifune Sensei, of all people!

I was rather taken aback and stiffened up. Of course, I had just crawled up from the ice. I finally managed to say good morning. Sensei stared me in the face. "What on earth are you doing?" he asked. I answered, finishing, that I was rinsing myself off in the water. Maybe Sensei felt sorry for me because he gave me a small towel and told me to dry off. Then he asked me why I was splashing myself with cold water. I explained that I had to walk every day from Tsurumi. At that, Mifune Sensei said to me, "Tonight you can come to my house. You fool… you'll ruin your health like this!"

From that day on, I stayed at Mifune Sensei's house. In essence, I became one of his dependents. At that time, there were hundreds of students who lived at his expense in order to learn judo, but of course, Sensei couldn't have that many staying in his own home. When I went there, he already had three people staying with him. I was told to go into a room with only three mats [about twenty square feet], and there were already two other fellows staying there. And were they ever big! There was hardly any place for me to spread my bedding, so the only thing I could do was lie down between them and go to sleep. It was warm enough sleeping there because I had the other two men's quilts on top of me, but during the night, whenever they moved, they would pull their blankets in either direction. Time after time, I would wake up because of the cold!

What kind of relationship did you have with Mifune Sensei?

During the day, Sensei would often tell us stories about various martial arts. That was especially good for me. I really learned just what judo was all about. It has often been said since the old days that there was no way that a student who commuted to the dojo could get a license. In other words, such a person could never receive a *menkyo kaiden* master-level teaching certification. These outside students come for practice time, and when training is over, they return home. On the other hand, the uchideshi are there for twenty-four hours a day, and so are able to hear all the various stories that the teacher tells. I really learned a lot. You come to understand the spiritual idea behind the art.

Would you tell us something about Kano Sensei's character and theories?

I'll tell you a story about him. Among his close students, there was an excellent man by the name of Okabe, who was quite intelligent as well as being a strong judo practitioner. However, this Mr. Okabe insisted that judo was a sport. "If judo is not a sport, it's nothing!" he said. Now Kano Sensei truly loved this student, but Sensei himself felt deeply that judo must not be turned into a sport. As you know, in foreign countries, there are churches which specialize in teaching people how to lead a moral life. In Japan, we have no similar institution whose job it is to instill such a sense of morality. As a result, Kano Sensei invented judo as a form of physical training which incorporated a method of moral training. He did this at a time when students had to really cram for their studies, and consequently, many of them would become sick. A large number died from lung diseases.

Kano Sensei reformed the old jujutsu techniques into judo; that is, he transformed these forms into a sport, so that it became possible to do something of a sporting nature in the rather special atmosphere that we find in a dojo. We make a distinction between seniors and juniors and things like that. The *do* of the word budo carries the meaning of virtue or morality. That is what a dojo is all about. It is a place where you cultivate virtue while you train in martial techniques. It is essentially concerned with virtue. That's why this one student and Kano Sensei had such heated arguments. No matter how much Sensei would explain his viewpoint, the other man would insist and make comments such as, "Such a half-hearted art is unacceptable. The method of winning and losing in judo is a sport, and personality development is personality development. There is no need for any form of moral cultivation in sports. It comes naturally while you engage in the activity." Later, this man received certification as an instructor of physical education. He was extremely theoretical.

All of this made Kano Sensei think. If a person practices only judo, it seemed that his art turned into pure sport. For this reason, he decided to introduce training in classical martial arts into the Kodokan, and had a special dojo built for that purpose. He wanted to show the pre-modern martial arts to everyone there, and those who were interested would be able to practice freely. He thought that if he could get them to understand the spirit of the classical martial arts, they would then be able to practice developing the true budo spirit. That's how he came to establish the Kobudo Kenkyukai [Classical Martial Arts Research Association].

How did you become connected with this group?

I had been staying at Mifune Sensei's home all this time, and I, too, felt the need to engage in spiritual training, and so I joined the research group. At that time, I was also a second dan in kendo, too, so I already understood how to use the sword, the footwork, and how to extend my arms. So I was completely different from those teachers who had done only judo. That's why after I started to take part in training in the classical arts, I came to the attention of Kano Sensei. "You have the makings of a leader," he told me. After that, I was to report to him once or twice a month on the progress of my training.

While I was doing that, Sensei said to me one day, "In the future you will be a top teacher here at the Kodokan." I was stunned. At that time, Mifune Sensei and Sanpo Toku Sensei were among the judo teaching greats. I wondered if I could ever reach such

Rinjiro Shirata at Iwama Taisai ceremony, 1986

Rinjiro Shirata

Born in Oyamura, Yamagata Prefecture, 1912-1993
Ninth dan, aikido
Second dan, judo

Rinjiro Shirata entered Morihei Ueshiba's Kobukan Dojo in 1932, through a family connection to the Omoto religion. He became one of the leading uchideshi, serving as a teaching assistant to the Founder, and instructing at outside dojos in the Tokyo and Osaka areas until conscripted into the Japanese Imperial Army in 1937. He was stationed in Manchuria and Burma during the World War II, and upon being repatriated, settled in his native Yamagata Prefecture.

After a training hiatus of several years, Shirata resumed teaching in the 1950s, and was one of the few active Aikikai instructors from the prewar era. He held several technical and administrative posts within the International Aikido Federation, and traveled abroad to instruct on several occasions. Awarded the ninth dan by the Aikikai, he remained active until shortly before his passing in Yamagata Prefecture in 1993.

Editor: Would you tell us about how you came to enroll in the old Kobukan dojo?

Shirata Sensei: Ueshiba Sensei and my father, who was an Omoto believer, met through their involvement in the religion, and as a result, my father decided he wanted me to train in aikido. You needed two sponsors to get permission to enter the dojo during the Kobukan period. I entered the dojo in 1932. I couldn't train at all at first. I was just an underling like "Oshin."[1] I would clear up and wash the dishes left by the senior students, and clean the toilets. We had to do everything. When more junior students appeared after some months, they let us train. First, we would just watch. Then gradually, we were able to train. That's how it was.

At night after training, we often massaged Ueshiba Sensei's shoulders; or rather we pushed on his back, along both sides of the spine and pressure points, with our fingers. While we did this, he would tell us many stories. He loved the story-book magazines that we call comic books today, such as *Sarutobi Sasuke*, *Kumasaka Chohan* (*Naganori*), *Ushiwakamaru*, and *Kirikakure Saizo*. He liked the story-book magazine tales of very strong people. Ueshiba Sensei listened while we read, and he would smile and say, "The technique he used was like this." He could see it in his head. I think, in this sense, he was exceptional. He also read many stories of the spirit world, and liked traditional heroic episodes.

Would you describe the atmosphere of the Kobukan Dojo at that time?

The atmosphere at that time was completely different from that of the present Hombu Dojo. There was an altar and a hanging scroll with "Takehaya Susanou no ookami, Futsunushi no ookami" and "Takemikazuchi no ookami"[2] written in the center. Onisaburo Deguchi's wife, Sumiko, was the second successor of the Omoto religion. The husband of her daughter Naohi, the third successor, was named Hidemaro. He wrote the characters on the scroll using his fingers. They are the names of three martial arts kami, who Ueshiba Sensei venerated greatly. The scroll was placed at the highest point of the altar, and Sensei would go there and recite Shinto prayers. Ueshiba Sensei was always with the kami. I think he had been involved in these practices for a long time. We memorized prayers naturally. We followed his example and walked up to the altar on our knees.

Who were the senior students at that time?

Akazawa Sensei and Yonekawa Sensei were already at the dojo then. Mr. Yonekawa came most frequently. Their seniors were Iwata Sensei, Yukawa Sensei, who sometimes came, and Kamada Sensei.

There was also a person named Kaoru Funahashi who has passed away. Yoichiro Inoue Sensei sometimes came, but didn't train, or at least I don't remember him training. There was a distance between Ueshiba Sensei and Inoue Sensei, and O-Sensei would sometimes remark, "I don't know what to do about Yoichi." Among the female students, there were Miss Kazuko Sekiguchi and Miss Takako Kunigoshi. They came everyday. They were really tough. I was helpless against them.

We talked to Miss Kunigoshi about two years ago.

I'm sure she still remembers me. She used to beat me up regularly! I couldn't possibly defeat her.

Kunigoshi Sensei drew the pictures for *Budo Renshu*. Did O-Sensei actually pose for the techniques in *Budo Renshu*?

Perhaps… Since Miss Kunigoshi is an artist, she drew very fast. Even though there were small changes of detail, she would draw them rapidly.

Could all of the students obtain copies of that book?

No. Ueshiba Sensei gave it to those who caught his eye. I was given a copy, too. Those who were given copies left their money on the dojo altar by way of thanks. There were almost no publications other than *Budo Renshu*, but there was something called a *mokuroku*, a Daito-ryu transmission scroll, which dealt with ikkajo and such techniques. It is a scroll with the same contents as *Budo Renshu*.

There is a portrait of Ueshiba Sensei on a scroll drawn by Miss Kunigoshi, which Doshu has at present. It is a very fine work. Through an involved series of events, having to do with the Second Omoto Incident in 1935, either last year or the year before, it finally arrived in Doshu's hands. At the time of the incident, Sensei was in Osaka. The Kyoto Police Headquarters issued an order to the Osaka Police Headquarters for his arrest, because he was a leading member of the Omoto religion. It was sudden, but there was some advance warning. There was a man named Kenji Tomita who was Chief of the Osaka Police Department and a ardent admirer of O-Sensei. He believed that it was impossible for O-Sensei to be accused of lese majesty, and that, although he was a member of the Omoto religion, he was devoting his life to budo. However, the Kyoto police said that if the Osaka police were not going to arrest Ueshiba Sensei, they would send their own officers to Osaka to arrest him. Ueshiba Sensei was told about this immediately. There was a man named Morita who was head of the Sonezaki Police Station, who was also a strong admirer of O-Sensei. He sheltered Ueshiba Sensei in his own house until the storm blew over. They came from Kyoto to look for him, but since he was in the police chief's house, they couldn't find him anywhere; not in Tokyo, Osaka, or Wakayama. Then gradually, the crisis subsided. Ueshiba Sensei gave the portrait drawn by Miss Kunigoshi to Mr. Morita by way of thanks.

About how long did the danger last?

About ten days. It was a disastrous blow for the Omoto religion. Afterwards, the scroll wandered from place to place. There was a man named Kiyoshi Sakuma of Sumitomo, who practiced aikido in Osaka. He was entrusted with the portrait by Mr. Morita, who said, "It is meaningless for me to keep it." Sakuma Sensei also thought it was pointless for him to keep it, and thought it would be best to return it to Doshu, which he did. Sakuma Sensei died this year [1983] at the age of eighty. Tomita Sensei later became the Chief Managing Director of the Aikikai in 1948.

Rinjiro Shirata as a young uchideshi, c. 1935

I understand that, at that time, Ueshiba Sensei went to many other dojos. Did you accompany him often?

There were many dojos, including the Military Police dojo, the Naval Academy dojo, the Torpedo Technical School and the Akasaka Dojo. The uchideshi dreamed of being permitted to accompany O-Sensei. I used to envy my seniors who accompanied him. I was very glad when I finally had a chance to go with him. Sensei's techniques varied depending on the dojo.

Were the techniques he showed in demonstrations completely different from what he did in the dojo?

The demonstration techniques were really fantastic, but there were some techniques in the dojo which could not be explained. There was an organization called the Seigankai. This was an organization that consisted of Ueshiba Sensei's supporters, for the purpose of perfecting his techniques, referred to at that time as Ueshiba-ryu Jujutsu, not Daito-ryu Jujutsu. There was a meeting about once every two or three months. There, Ueshiba Sensei, dressed in his formal kimono *haori* [half coat] and hakama, would do a special demonstration. He showed what he had been practicing, and these gatherings were really wonderful. A group of top people would attend, including a naval admiral by the name of Isamu Takeshita, and various people from the financial world, the martial arts world, and the religious world.

We understand that Admiral Takeshita took many notes on the techniques he studied.

He may have done so. He was that type of person. Admiral Takeshita was the first person to promote aikido in the late 1920s. Naval personnel travel abroad. As a result of his contacts with foreign people, he demonstrated one or two points. Foreigners tended to be a bit wary of Japanese naval offcers because the officers knew such splendid martial techniques. Admiral Takeshita was a Lieutenant Commander then.

Did Admiral Takeshita participate in the Second World War?

No, he didn't. He was already an Admiral by about 1931. Many people from the navy

came to the dojo. Many also came from the army, headed by Duke Toshinari Maeda. Kenzo Futaki, a brown-rice enthusiast, came too. Every morning at six o'clock, even in the winter, he would come to the dojo and noisily open the door. Then he would clap his hands. His claps would wake us up, and then training started. It was certainly amazing that that old man—he was more than seventy years old at the time—showed up rain or shine. We thought, "Today he surely won't come," but he would be there! He came for morning exercise, and he was good at kokyuho. He did a good job of basic techniques.

Did you used to warm up before training in the old days?

Sensei never had us warm up before training. We warmed ourselves up while waiting for Sensei to arrive. As soon as he turned up, practice began. Even though we practiced some before he came, we had to stop and sit in seiza, and begin with a bow. When Ueshiba Sensei wasn't able to be there, one of the senior uchideshi would go to Sensei and get permission to teach. Ueshiba Sensei most often practiced *suwariwaza ikkyo*.[3] So, the senior would say, "Sensei, we would like permission to do suwariwaza ikkyo." Ueshiba Sensei would answer, "All right." We trained for one or one-and-a-half hours. We often did *kokyu undo*.[4] I guess you could say that those exercises were our warm-up. They were to train our legs and hips. Ueshiba Sensei said that we should start and finish with kokyu undo.

Were there many injuries during training before the war?

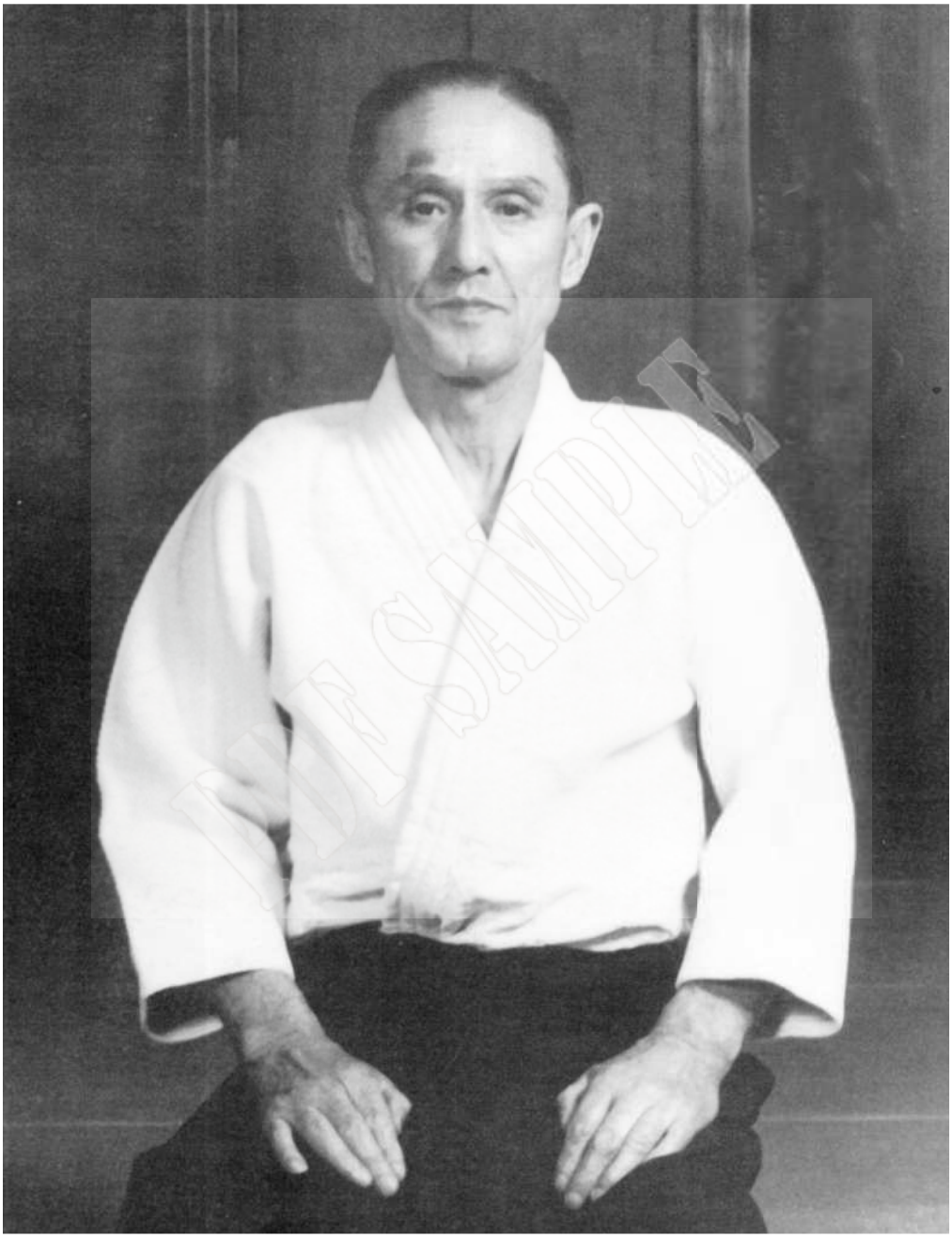
There were almost no injuries during training. We were very careful about that. Mr. Yukawa, a senior student, was injured taking falls for O-Sensei when he demonstrated before the Emperor. If you displayed a half-hearted attitude towards Sensei, you would get injured, but as long as one was serious, there were no injuries. There were times, however, when your wrist would be so swollen because of nikyo, *sankyo*, and *yonkyo*[5] that you couldn't hold chopsticks.

How did beginners at that time learn basic techniques?

They learned techniques from the uchideshi, starting with the ikkajo of Daito-ryu Jujutsu. Techniques like ikkajo, nikajo, shihonage… There wasn't any iriminage then, only techniques which, on later reflection, can be considered to be the antecedents of iriminage. Iriminage was originally developed by O-Sensei. Sensei's techniques were always changing. Techniques which had their origin in Daito-ryu were transformed into aiki, and as he trained himself, gradually his techniques changed as well. That's why the techniques Tomiki Sensei learned, the techniques we learned, the techniques Shioda Sensei learned, and the techniques Murashige Sensei learned before that, were all completely different. Sensei sometimes said to me, "Shirata, my techniques have changed. Look!" So I watched him. They became circular in a way completely different from his earlier techniques. Doshu [Kisshomaru Ueshiba] systemized and perfected those techniques.

Was the training of the prewar uchideshi different from that of the general students?

There wasn't any special training for uchideshi. If there was, it was during the Budo



Gozo Shioda in formal pose, taken c. 1970

Gozo Shioda

Born in Tokyo, 1915-1994
Founder, Yoshinkan Aikido
Third dan, judo

The son of a noted pediatrician, Gozo Shioda enrolled in the Kobukan Dojo, in May, 1932 prior to entering Tokushoku University. He became an uchideshi while still a university student, and served as a teaching assistant to Morihei Ueshiba in the Tokyo and Osaka areas. Shioda trained under the Founder until he left Japan in 1941. During the war, he worked in a civilian capacity in China, Taiwan, Borneo, and the Celebes.

After the war, Shioda spent a brief period training under Ueshiba in Iwama. Later, in 1952, Shioda began teaching aikido to employees of the Nihon Kokan Steel Company, and various police departments. In 1955, with the support of prominent businessmen, he established the Yoshinkan Aikido Dojo in Tsukudo Hachiman. In 1990, Shioda launched the International Yoshinkai Aikido Federation to further the worldwide spread of the Yoshinkan style of aikido. He is the author of numerous technical books on aikido, and an autobiography entitled Aikido Jinsei *[An Aikido Life], published in 1985. Shioda held the rank of ninth dan, and is the Founder of Yoshinkan Aikido.*

Editor: It is my understanding that, when Ueshiba Sensei was still living in Ayabe at the Omoto headquarters, he was called to Tokyo by Admirals Gombei Yamamoto[1] and Isamu Takeshita, and that was the beginning of his activities there.

Shioda Sensei: Yes. The dojo [which was later] built in Ushigome, was the first one in Tokyo. Admiral Takeshita took an active interest in collecting money. The admiral told people how wonderful a martial artist Ueshiba Sensei was, and gathered together many people. It would have been inconvenient if Ueshiba Sensei continued to live secluded in the countryside in Ayabe, so Admiral Takeshita brought him to Tokyo, built a dojo and encouraged him to work hard. Admiral Takeshita was very powerful in those days, and he raised money from places like Mitsui and Mitsubishi to build the dojo. Ueshiba Sensei didn't use any of his money at all.

I guess Ueshiba Sensei didn't have any financial concerns then.

That's right. He was also backed by the Omoto religion. There were sometimes as many as fifteen or sixteen uchideshi at the Ushigome dojo, and Ueshiba Sensei provided room and board for them all.

It seems there were many military officers among the Omoto believers.

Yes, there were. The reason there were many believers in the navy was that, when they were on long cruises and a mirage or some unusual event of a mysterious nature occurred, the sailors would become believers in the kami.

Sensei, I believe that, before enrolling in the Kobukan dojo in Ushigome, you first practiced judo.

Yes, that's right. Then I entered Ueshiba Sensei's dojo in May, 1932.

Previously, we have had the opportunity of interviewing Shigemi Yonekawa, Zenzaburo Akazawa, Hisao Kamada, Takuma Hisa, Kenji Tomiki, and Miss Takako Kunigoshi, all of whom were prominent in the early history of aikido.

Ah, Miss Kunigoshi! Every morning, she would be inside the precincts of the Shoin Yoshida shrine cleaning up. The principal of my middle school used to be a good friend of my father, and he often went to the Shoin Shrine. He used to see Miss Kunigoshi doing her early morning cleaning, and was quite impressed. One day, he spoke to her, and she said, "I am studying under a teacher of aikido by the name of Morihei Ueshiba." After that, he went along to the Ueshiba Dojo with Miss Kunigoshi, where he was able to watch a demonstration by O-Sensei and was very impressed. That's how I came to start the art. I'll never forget the date—May 23, 1932.

It's sort of turning the story around backwards, but my father had a strong liking for martial arts, and had even built a dojo called the Yoshinkan, on a corner in Daikyo-cho.[2] He invited teachers of kendo and judo to come and teach there. One time, an old teacher of the Shibukawa-ryu school came and gave an exhibition. After it was finished, he requested a match with someone from the dojo. There happened to be this fifth dan in judo who was at

one time an aspiring sumo wrestler, and it was he who stepped forward. Well, that teacher found himself flying through the air, the victim of an *uchimata*[3] throw. Since that occasion, I believed that judo was the strongest art there was.

What were your initial impressions of Ueshiba Sensei?

Frankly, when I first saw Ueshiba Sensei's demonstration, I thought it was all faked. When he finished he said, "Shioda, come attack me!" I asked, "What would you like me to do?" To this he replied, "Do anything you want. Just come and try to do something to me." I was at that time about a third dan in judo, and O-Sensei was slightly smaller than me. He was wide but short. So I went up and tried to kick him with all my might. Just as I expected to make contact with him I found myself thrown, and I hit my head with a bang! As my eyes went dim, I had to say, "I give up, you win." The very next day, I went and joined up.

Those were the days. At that time, Ueshiba Sensei was very strict indeed. You had to have an introduction from two guarantors to be able to join the dojo. In my case, my father and the principal vouched for me. That would be almost exactly fifty years ago!

Ueshiba Sensei was introduced to many military officers and political figures who became his supporters.

Yes. All of the people who came to practice were of high-social standing, and included Kobo Saionji and the son of Fumimaro Konoe.[4] Also, people like Admiral Gombei Yamamoto and Admiral Takeshita promoted Ueshiba Sensei, and because of their infiuence, these prominent people gathered together.

Admiral Takeshita trained very hard, and was quite skilled. He also served as the president of the Sumo Association. He was the president for many terms, and his arms were strong enough to hand over the sumo championship trophy, which weighed about sixty-five pounds, to the tourney winners. He even rose to the position of Court Chamberlain, and had the Imperial princes and princesses practice aikido.

Did you ever think of testing Ueshiba Sensei during your early years?

When I was in my younger days, I really had my doubts about aikido. When I saw what O-Sensei was doing, I doubted whether he was truly strong. Since I was his student I was always being thrown. I didn't think he was strong, and thought there must be more to aikido than this. I decided to learn some jujutsu or *bojutsu* [staff art], and so I went to the dojo of Takaji Shimizu.[5] There I was taught how to hold the bo. Then Shimizu Sensei came over to me and said, "It's wrong to hold the bo so lightly. Attack me all out!" So I asked, "Is it really okay to attack?" and executed a quick movement which sent Shimizu Sensei flying. I thought then that aikido was truly wonderful, and after that, I applied myself to training. Kokyu power is tremendous. It's different from training in jujutsu. If you execute a sharp movement, you can send your partner fiying. Later, when I met Shimizu Sensei at the Metropolitan Police Department, he said, "Shioda, I'm glad to see you." That's what happened.

Since I was young, too, I practiced martial arts because I wanted to be the absolute strongest.

How did O-Sensei approach teaching during the Kobukan years?

In the old days, it seemed more as if he was acting as a medium for the kami, rather than teaching. When we were training, Ueshiba Sensei would make us feel things directly rather than teach us. He didn't give detailed explanations telling us, for example, to "turn forty degrees," as we do today. That's why at that time, we had to study things on our own. He would say, "That's right, that's right," or "Learn it on your own later." It was the old-fashioned apprenticeship system.

Gozo Shioda at about age 18

I suppose people nowadays wouldn't be satisfied with this, but we were not taught systematically. Sensei acted according to his feelings and the conditions of the moment, so there was no connection between yesterday and today. That was the old method of teaching. We would absorb what we were taught ourselves and systematize it. We had to think about things by ourselves. I, too, have built on the foundation I acquired over a long period under Ueshiba Sensei. And now, I continue to do what I have been able to put together. People today can't follow Ueshiba Sensei's way of teaching. I think it's difficult.

Several of the uchideshi of the Kobukan period are well-known, even today. Occasionally, I have heard the name of Masahiro Hashimoto. When did he enter the dojo?

A little after I did. He wasn't an uchideshi for very long. People like Rinjiro Shirata, Tsutomu Yukawa, Yonekawa, Akazawa, and Kaoru Funahashi formed the actual core group. Funahashi is already dead, but his techniques were wonderful. In the early days, Ueshiba Sensei always used him as his *uke*. They all really practiced diligently as uchideshi. Mr. Yonekawa taught us. Mr. Yukawa was already married, and had gone to Osaka.

Was Mr. Yukawa teaching professionally in Osaka?

Yes. The main group left in Tokyo were people like Akazawa, Yonekawa, and Shirata. Miss Kunigoshi practiced hard, and I think she was one of the pioneer female practitioners.

I would like to ask you about Kenzo Futaki, who trained under Ueshiba Sensei in those days. I understand he was quite a famous person.

He followed a brown-rice diet, and was a professor in the Medical Department of Tokyo University. When he was training at the dojo, he had already retired from Tokyo University, and was a professor emeritus. Futaki Sensei lived in Nuke Benten, just down the hill from the Ueshiba Dojo in Ushigome. He would come to train between five and six in the morning. He was even older than O-Sensei, and so he trained in a rather selfish man-

ner. Then he would take the uchideshi as his partners and start to throw us. He used to love to see his partner go flying after he had only barely touched him. Well, we uchideshi were supposed to be his partners, so we would go along with him and take these tremendous, flying breakfalls. The problem was that this would go on forever, it seemed. Finally, when we had had enough and decided that we were going to pin this old man just one time, Sensei shouted, "Okay, that's enough!"

Sensei used to take Mr. Futaki as his own partner and gave him a sword. The old man would cut, and Sensei would always evade to the right. Mr. Futaki must have noticed this, and one time he came in and cut off to the right. This time Sensei just stood there without moving and said, "What are you doing Futaki Sensei?" Futaki Sensei stuttered something about it being a mistake. That was a very amusing episode.

He was famous for his brown-rice diet, and would bring food to the dojo and say, "Eat this, and you'll become strong and good at aikido."

How did you find his brown-rice diet?

The food didn't taste very good.

Was Futaki Sensei very good technically?

No, he wasn't particularly good. He practiced for health purposes. But he came almost every day, winter or summer, to train. He never caught a cold or got sick. He would always say, "If you eat brown rice you will enjoy eternal youth and live a long life!" He continued coming for a long time.

How did Futaki Sensei come to meet Ueshiba Sensei?

I don't know the details, but I think it had something to do with aikido being good for the health. One time, when Ueshiba Sensei threw me, I pulled a muscle in my groin and Futaki Sensei gave me first aid. He liked me, and would often say, "Shioda, let's practice together!" He really threw me a lot. He died when he was over ninety years old. There's nobody like him nowadays!

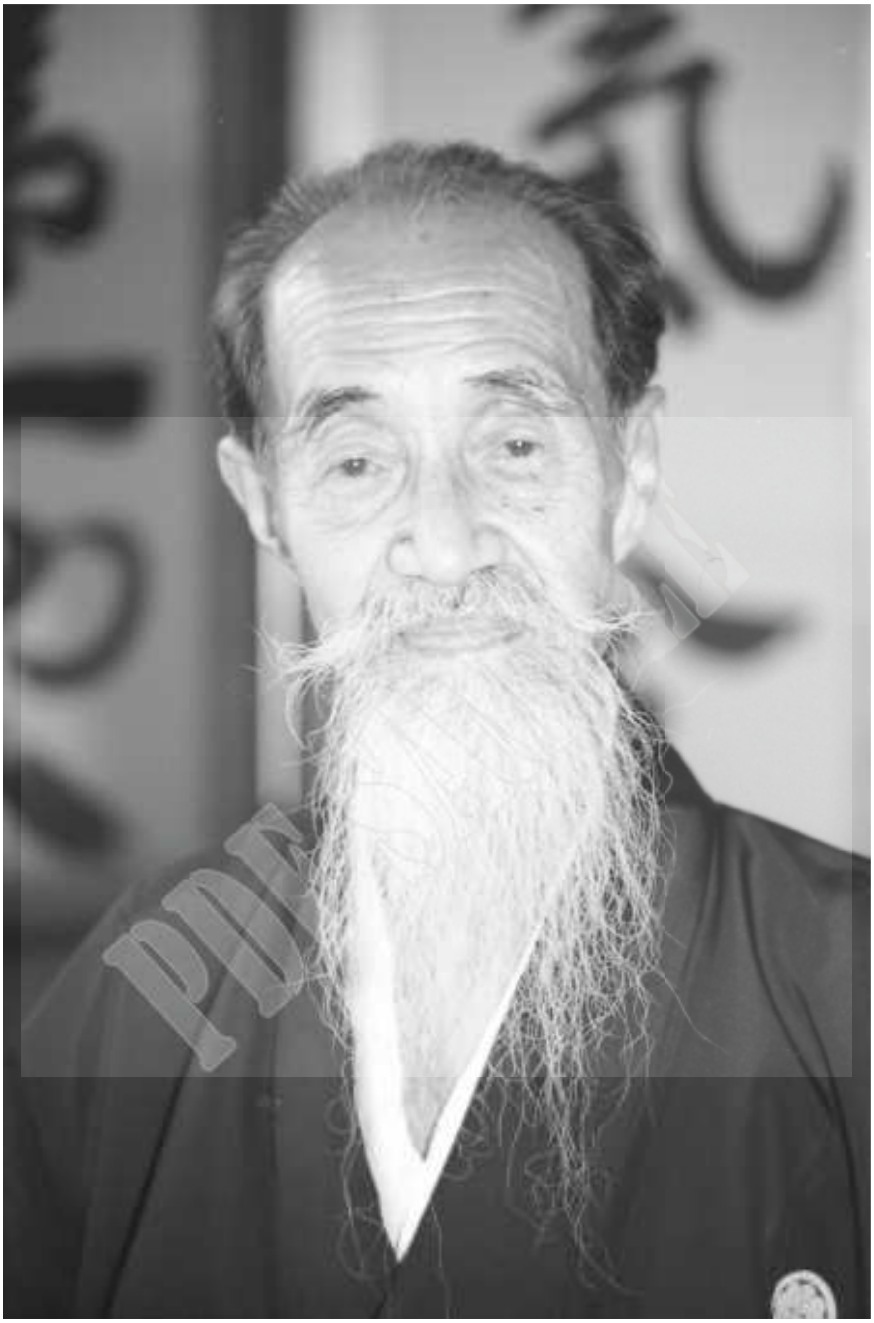
Can you tell us something about Kosaburo Gejo of the Yagyu Shinkage-ryu sword school?

Mr. Gejo came to the Ueshiba Dojo to learn aikido. I met him two or three times. He was older than Ueshiba Sensei. He lived to an old age. I think he passed away when he was about ninety years old.

What school of Yagyu-ryu did O-Sensei practice?

I think it was Edo Yagyu. I don't think it was Owari Yagyu. There are two kinds of Yagyu, the Edo and Owari. The true style is in Nagoya and is called Owari Yagyu. Ueshiba Sensei said he studied Yagyu-ryu and Shinkage-ryu. I think it was after he studied Daito-ryu, but I never saw him practice them.

I don't know if Sensei ever called in a Yagyu-ryu teacher to teach or not, but he had



Yoshio Sugino at his Kawasaki Dojo c. 1993

Yoshio Sugino

Born Naruto-machi, Chiba Prefecture, 1904-1998
Tenth dan, kobudo (Katori Shinto-ryu), IMAF

Yoshio Sugino began practicing judo and kendo as a boy, and eventually became an outstanding judo competitor at the Kodokan. Later, he became dissatisfied with competitive judo, and around 1927, began to study Yoshin Koryu Jujutsu. He also practiced Katori Shinto-ryu under the auspices of the Kodokan's Kobudo Kenkyukai program.

In 1932, Sugino observed a demonstration by Morihei Ueshiba, and enrolled in the Kobukan Dojo, where he studied for a short period. He operated a judo dojo during the 1930s and 40s, and became a judo instructor at Keio University starting about 1939.

Sugino resumed operation of his Kawasaki Dojo after the end of the postwar ban on martial arts, and taught Katori Shinto-ryu thereafter. He assisted famous movie director Akira Kurosawa in choreographing the martial arts sequences of several famous samurai films of the 1950s, including The Seven Samurai *and* Yojimbo.

Sugino frequently traveled abroad in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily to Europe, to teach Katori Shinto-ryu, and held a tenth dan awarded by the International Martial Arts Federation. His dojo, still operated by his son Yukihiro, also functions as a branch dojo of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo.

Editor: Sensei, please tell us about your initial martial arts training experience.

Sugino Sensei: I studied judo under Iizuka Sensei of the Kodokan, and kendo under Saneatsu Shingai. In 1922, I received my first dan in judo. It was what we called a *batsugun shodan* [distinguished first dan], awarded to those with excellent records. If you were a batsugun shodan, you were treated differently from a normal first dan, and people tended to regard you as a cut above the others. After I became first dan, I was never defeated in the *kohaku jiai*,[1] the records of which are preserved in the Kodokan. I always threw my opponents, and in this way, was promoted to fourth dan.

In my day, military officers Tokujiro Akagawa and Kunijiro Minagawa also became batsugun shodan. Mr. Akagawa threw about twelve or thirteen opponents, and Mr. Minagawa about sixteen. At that time, Mr. Minagawa participated in the contests against me. I guess he was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, while those from my group were still teenagers. He was a captain of the Navy Sumo Club, but was only a first *kyu*.[2] Since he was practicing judo in the navy and couldn't go outside to compete, he wasn't promoted. But he was quite strong. I think he was at the level of a third dan.

I had been practicing kendo and judo while I was a student of Keio University. When I was a second dan, Mr. Mochizuki was promoted to first dan. When I became third dan, he became second dan. When I became fourth dan, he became third dan. So I was always ranked higher than Mr. Mochizuki. Although I was very small, I was strong and was never defeated.

Were there any weight divisions then?

None at all. Weight divisions were introduced after the war.

There was one particular match, when I was a fourth dan, that I consider my best. At that time, fifth dans no longer participated in matches, so the highest rank for competition was fourth dan. Mr. Sanpo Toku was a fifth dan. Among the well-known fourth dans were Kozo Sonezaki, Koichi Terayama, and Seiichi Shirai. I was promoted at the same time as they were, and went undefeated. I was pretty conceited when I was young.

One time, at a tournament for fourth dans, my opponent applied a technique on me, and I suddenly jumped up, then countered with *utsurigoshi*.[3] If he had pulled more strongly, I would have fallen down, but as it was, I managed to throw him with *yorikiri*.[4] So it was absolutely clear that I won. However, the judge didn't say anything; perhaps he was looking away or was surprised, I don't know. At that time, unlike the present, we didn't have two or three judges. Then, later, wazaari[5] was called. Although there was no doubt about my utsurigoshi being *ippon*,[6] they considered it wazaari. I felt ridiculous, and that eventually led to my abandoning Kodokan judo. I stopped going after that incident.

When did you first open up your dojo?

I established a Kodokan judo dojo in Kawasaki in 1927. Teachers today may not be aware of it, but at that time, an instructor was not allowed to establish a branch dojo of the Kodokan unless he was a third dan or higher. Also, we were obliged to report to the Kodokan each month the number of new students, total practitioners, and the amount of fees we received.

Sugino demonstrating iaijutsu in his early 50s

After that, I studied Yoshin Koryu Jujutsu, and then started aikido. Therefore, I didn't consider aikido to be just an ordinary art. Although I started out studying Kodokan judo, I began to feel dissatisfied with it, so around 1927, I began to practice old-style jujutsu. My teacher was named Genro Kanaya, a top instructor of the Butokukai, and the name of the school was Yoshin Koryu. He was a great teacher.

Later, around 1935, he gave a demonstration of Yoshin Koryu Jujutsu for the Crown Prince at the Saineikan Dojo in the Imperial Palace. I took the breakfalls for him then. The Yoshin Koryu style is more or less the same as the present Tenjin Shinyo-ryu or Kito-ryu Jujutsu.

I also studied Katori Shinto-ryu. Kodokan founder Jigoro Kano encouraged his high-ranking students to study other Japanese traditional martial arts, because he thought that judo alone was insufficient. So he sent a messenger to the Katori Shinto-ryu Dojo. Katori Shinto-ryu, as both a dojo and a martial tradition, has a history dating back about six hundred

years. It is the source of Kashima Shinto-ryu, which is an offshoot of Katori Shinto-ryu. Kano Sensei invited the best student of Katori Shinto-ryu to teach. Since Kano Sensei thought that Katori Shinto-ryu should be preserved, I began to study it, together with Mr. Minoru Mochizuki and Mr. Jiro Takeda. All arts, including *shuriken* [throwing knife], naginata, *yari* [spear], *ryoto* [two swords], *kodachi*, sword, bojutsu, and iai[7] make up the Katori Shinto-ryu. Old-style martial arts, unlike modern martial arts such as kendo and judo, were not divided into specialties. They are what we call *sogo bujutsu*.[8]

Sugino instructs Toshiro Mifune on the set of "Yojimbo" as Akira Kurosawa looks on.

Can you tell us about Kano Sensei's visit to the Ueshiba Dojo in 1930?

Kano Sensei, along with two or three others, including Mr. Kyuzo Mifune, an instructor of the Kodokan, and Mr. Nagaoka, went to Ueshiba Sensei's dojo in Shinjuku to observe his training. It is said that Kano Sensei remarked after seeing the training, "This is true judo." Mr. Nagaoka then is supposed to have joked, "Sensei, then is what we are doing false judo?" Kano Sensei meant it in the broader sense. He praised aikido, explaining that it was not just judo, but judo in a wider sense. At that time, the art was not called aikido. It was called Kobu or Daito-ryu.

Kano Sensei asked Ueshiba Sensei to teach this art to some of his students, and then sent Mr. Mochizuki, since he was a serious man and also practiced Katori Shinto-ryu. But Mochizuki was quick-tempered, so Mr. Jiro Takeda was also sent along to look after him. I knew Mr. Takeda well. He was somewhat reserved, and was not young. I guess he must

have been fifty years old at that time. I think Mochizuki was twenty-five or twenty-six. Mr. Takeda was a fifth dan in judo then. He practiced aikido as if he were doing calisthenics.

Sensei, we understand that you also used to practice at the Kobukan Dojo before the war. Would you tell us a little about the atmosphere of the old dojo, and the type of training that took place there?

I, of course, was still doing judo, but I had lost interest in judo techniques. In about 1932, I visited Ueshiba Sensei's newly-built dojo in Wakamatsu-cho, through an introduction from Konishi Sensei, and saw O-Sensei's technique. This is how I came to meet Morihei Ueshiba Sensei. I felt that his technique was truly great, and became an ardent admirer. He was a man of unusual ability—a man capable of performing superhuman feats. He was simply extraordinary. Those practicing aikido today say that Ueshiba Sensei was amazing, but also wonder if what he did was for real. They say such things because they have never seen his technique first-hand. Those who are in their thirties or forties talk about the greatness of Musashi Miyamoto or Mataemon Araki, but since they have never seen them, they can't know what was actually true. By comparison, I am lucky because I saw Ueshiba Sensei directly.

Most of those who were training when I was there have already passed away. Mr. Iwata of Nagoya practiced there, and was quite enthusiastic about training. There were also people like Dr. Kenzo Futaki, a specialist in the brown-rice diet, and a son of Buyo [Takeaki] Enomoto, who was, as you know, a high-ranking member of the Shogunate who secluded himself up in a place called Goryokaku [in Hakodate, Hokkaido]. By this act, he sided with the Shogunate. However, he ended up surrendering to Takamori Saigo. Then, I believe he served in the newly established Meiji government and became a Minister of the Navy. It was his son Harunosuke who used to come to the dojo.

There were also some doctors of engineering and medical science at that time. Another figure was Major-General Makoto Miura. Sometimes Mr. Hidemaro Deguchi, the husband of Onisaburo Deguchi's daughter, came to the dojo. Although we [professional teachers] studied under Ueshiba Sensei after having practiced martial arts like judo and kendo, this was not the case with the people I just mentioned. Since they were amateurs, they seemed to practice lightly for exercise. We came to study under Ueshiba Sensei after already having established dojos of our own.

What was it about the budo of Ueshiba Sensei that so strongly attracted people experienced in other martial arts?

It was the fact that his budo was alive, a living budo. Morihei Ueshiba Sensei often said, "Everything springs from the sword. The sword is the source." When someone attacks you with his weapon and your weapon is a kodachi, you can't rely on it alone. It would be impossible to fight against a naginata with a kodachi, for example. Because such weapons are unreliable, it is necessary to have arts like aikido or jujutsu, where you avoid the attack without a weapon when your opponent comes to strike you. You don't have the feeling [at any given moment] that you are executing either sword or jujutsu techniques. They are all combined in one. In my opinion, the sword and jo are one also. I really felt that what

Takako Kunigoshi at the time of her graduation from Japan Women's Fine Arts University, 1933

Takako Kunigoshi

Born Takamatsu, Shikoku Prefecture, 1911-c. 2000
Third dan, aikido

Takako Kunigoshi entered the Kobukan Dojo in 1933, just prior to her graduation from Japan Women's Fine Arts University. One of the few female students at the Kobukan Dojo, she trained seriously, and gained the full respect of both Ueshiba Sensei and the uchideshi. A skilled artist, Kunigoshi did the technical illustrations for the 1934 book Budo Renshu, *which was given to certain students in lieu of a teaching license. Kunigoshi later trained at the private dojo of Admiral Isamu Takeshita for several years, and taught self-defense courses to various women's groups.*

Following the war, Kunigoshi did not resume her aikido training. After her retirement, she taught the Japanese tea ceremony out of her home in Ikebukuro, Tokyo for many years.

Editor: Sensei, how did you come to begin training at the Kobukan Dojo?

Kunigoshi Sensei: I had wanted to study kembu sword dancing. My father was a soldier, and he told me it would be all right if I went to the dojo in Wakamatsu-cho. Some friends and I went there, and we said we wanted to study kembu. "We don't do kembu here, we do aiki; but there is a training session in progress now if you'd like to watch for a while," we were told. After that, I was hooked.

I started in January of 1933, the year that I graduated from school. I went on my own to the 6 a.m. morning class, on my way to school.

How many daily training sessions were there back then?

There was the 6 a.m. class and another morning practice at about 10 a.m. Then, for people who worked in the daytime, there were three other periods in the evening. Then the uchideshi could train anytime in between those hours, too.

How frequently did you train?

Usually every morning.

Were classes held every morning?

Let's see, were classes held on Saturdays? I think the only day off was Sunday.

I imagine there weren't very many women among the students in those days.

There were only two of us! The other woman was two or three years younger than me. Even so, Ueshiba Sensei never made us feel different by changing things because we were women.

Things were not like they are now, and the art was not so well-known. I would say that there were about six or seven uchideshi who lived and slept in the dojo, and probably about the same number of people who came from their own homes.

What was the training like when you were a beginner?

Someone would grab my hand, and I would be shown how to release it.

Who were the uchideshi in those days?

There was Mr. Yonekawa, Mr. Shirata, Mr. Funahashi, and Mr. Yukawa. I believe Mr. Yonekawa was the oldest among our group. Last year [1979], he and I made a trip to the Kasama Inari Shrine[1] together on our way home from the ceremony that was held to mark the tenth anniversary of O-Sensei's death.

Who were your training partners?

Mr. Funahashi was the shortest of the uchideshi, and I'm short too, so we trained together a lot. If I trained with Mr. Yonekawa, I had to do this [gesturing], and he had those big hands. My wrists grew thicker. I thought to myself, "This is disgusting for a woman. My wrists are becoming thick, and they look like a man's." After I practiced a lot, the problem

began to disappear, but in the beginning my arms became hard. When you are faced with a partner whose arms are like clubs, you have to do this [gesture]. I trained the most with Funahashi. He later died of a respiratory disease.

When we women trained, we had to change in a very small space. There was no dressing room. I don't how we managed to change into our training clothes with all those men there. Somehow we would do like this [gesturing] with our kimono, and put our *keikogi* [training uniform] on quickly from above and the hakama from below. I was pretty good at it. There were lots of keikogi and clothes hanging down above us.

Would you describe Ueshiba Sensei's approach to teaching?

No matter what we asked him, I think we always got the same answer. Anyway, there wasn't a soul there who could understand any of the things he said. I guess he was talking about spiritual subjects, but the meaning of his words was just beyond us. Later, we would stand around and ask each other, "Just what was it Sensei was talking about anyway?"

Did he speak about the kamisama?

Yes. He was originally an Omoto believer. The kamisama worshiped at the dojo were the kamisama of the Omoto religion. I once went with him to Ayabe.

Did he explain the mechanics of techniques?

No, he didn't. I think they say ikkyo and nikyo nowadays, but in the old days Ueshiba Sensei said ikkajo and nikajo, etc. He would just say, "You do ikkajo like this." Later, he would make comments to students such as to do it more this way, or that way, or he might say, "Don't put power in that direction," to the person who was his partner. He taught Funahashi and Yonekawa directly in some detail.

Did Ueshiba Sensei observe people during training and correct their mistakes?

Yes, he corrected their mistakes.

Did you have many chances to be thrown directly by O-Sensei?

Yes, I did, and he certainly didn't pull any punches because I was female. You often hear it said that in aikido, the size of one's body is not so relevant, but I think there is a certain handicap in being small. When my partner took hold of my arm, his fingers usually wrapped around so that his own fingertips overlapped. Then when I tried to grasp my partner, there was a significant gap between my thumb and fingertips. I had to use both hands and grip for all I was worth, and then I would just about equal their single-handed hold. That's a big disadvantage. I had to grip so hard that I ended up getting stiff, and I worried about being inflexible. Two or three years after I quit training, I was still pretty rigid.

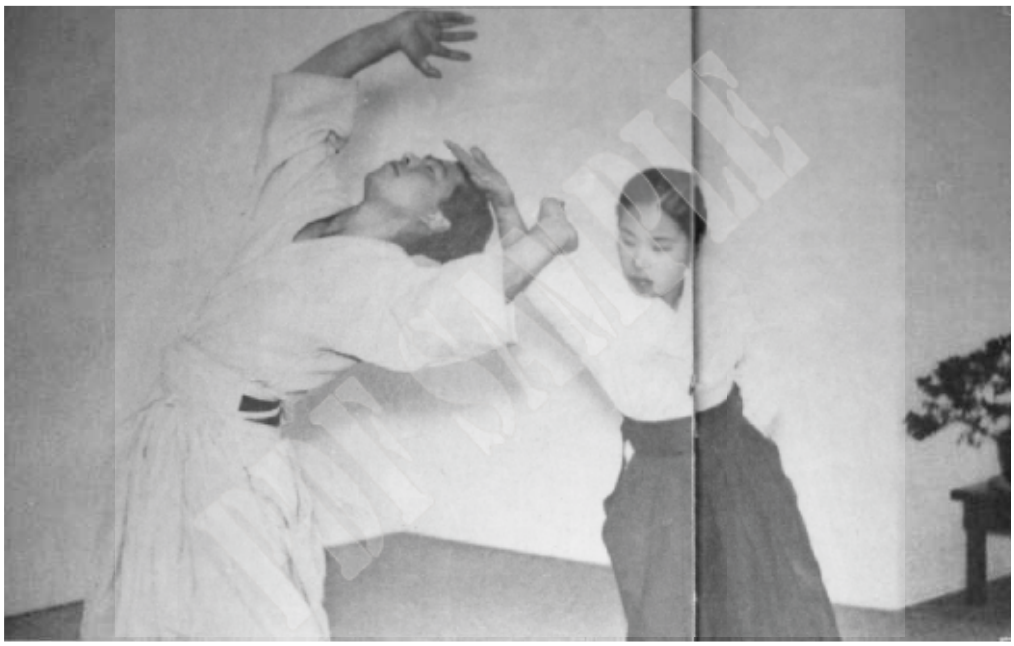
In those days, did beginners also wear hakama?

Everyone wore them. When you joined, you had to buy a training uniform and that

included a hakama. Most people used black, but some had white. At first, I bought a white one, but it got so filthy that I took it home and dyed it black, because they were so hard to wash.

We have seen old movies where the bayonet was used. Did you ever use that weapon in practice in those days?

Yes, we did. Someone would thrust with a wooden bayonet, and we would try to deal with that kind of attack. We also worked against a spear attack. There was just about every type of major weapon in the dojo. Even I was expected to have practiced against the cutting attack of a wooden sword. We were expected not only to be able to avoid the attacks of a person armed with a weapon, but also to take the role of the attacker and wield the weapons.



Takako Kunigoshi executing technique on Shigemi Yonekawa in a photo that appeared in the *Shukan Asahi* weekly magazine, c. 1935

When you cut, the weapon should make a high-pitched whistling sound, but at first it's not so easy to get that perfect sound. It's more of a low whooshing sound! After a year or so, though, I was able to get a good pitch.

When you were training, were there any fixed monthly fees?

No, there weren't. In the old days, the teacher and students were really like a unit. You could say, "Hey everybody! I just bought some sweet rolls. Come and get it!" I guess that would be a little hard to do now. Sensei's wife would have lunch ready for us, and in return, we would completely clean the dojo. When that was finished, we would play badminton for an hour or two in the dojo. We felt like we were all members of the family. As far as numbers, I'm sure there couldn't have

been anywhere near even one-fifth the number of people there are today. Sometimes, someone would arrange some flowers in the entry hall alcove; people would do things like that.

It's wonderful that you still have contact with your friends from that period.

There were so few of us that our ties with each other were quite strong. I suppose now that everything is so big, no one knows who's coming or going, but I remember that if someone said, "I have to go to the country, but I don't have the cash," right away another member would say, "Don't worry, I'll loan you some," just like that.

Was Ueshiba Sensei's son, Kisshomaru, present at the dojo very often?

Kisshomaru was just a small boy then. I was asked to teach Kisshomaru a little bit about arithmetic, after training was over. He was having trouble with arithmetic in elementary school, and was concerned about not being able to enter middle school. I laughed and said that I was not an arithmetic teacher. Kisshomaru has really come to resemble Ueshiba Sensei.

Was Kisshomaru training at that time?

I don't think he had yet started to train very much during the time with which I am familiar. He went to the school down next to the Shinjuku Imperial Garden. Today, it is called Shinjuku High, but years ago it was known as the Number Six Middle School. I think he started training after he graduated from that school.

Among the famous people at the Kobukan Dojo was a doctor named Kenzo Futaki. Do you have any recollections of him?

He was famous for his brown-rice diet. There was a girls' school which was founded by Futaki Sensei near the east exit of Ikebukuro Station. I visited it on one occasion.

Do you recall any particular episodes involving Futaki Sensei?

Yes. In the old days, there were no rooms for the uchideshi, so everybody slept inside the dojo. There was an entrance here [gesturing] and another entrance on the opposite side. When we went to train at the 6 a.m. class, we would enter from the rear entrance and shout good morning, and be about to open the door, only to find that the uchideshi were still sleeping. It wasn't the kind of situation where we could go inside and find a corner and rest in the dojo. It was a strict atmosphere, and women absolutely could not go into a place where men were. We said to each other, "Since we are women, we can't go inside, so we'll just have to wait." There was a large field on this side of the dojo, and Kazuko Sekiguchi and I sat down on a stone, hoping the uchideshi would wake up soon. Then one of us would remark, "Oh, Futaki Sensei's here, so they'll get up soon!" When we stood up, only the spot where we had been sitting was wet. The frost where we were sitting had melted. We would ask each other, "Is my backside wet?" and look at the backs of our hakama.

Since Futaki Sensei was an important person, he would shout good morning in a loud voice, and everyone would get up. Those of us who were waiting would then go in. Then we would begin cleaning.

Tenryu at the height of his career as a sumo Sekiwake

Tenryu

[Saburo Wakuta]
Born Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture, 1903-1989
Sumo Sekiwake

Tenryu entered the Dewanoumi sumo stable in 1920, and earned promotion to sekiwake*, sumo's third highest rank, in 1930. In 1932, he seceded from the Japan Sumo Association, taking with him dozens of other wrestlers, in a movement to reform the feudalistic sumo system. Tenryu ultimately abandoned the movement, and moved to Manchuria to take up a teaching position.*

In 1939, while still in Manchuria, he saw a demonstration by Morihei Ueshiba. At first, doubtful of the Founder's technique, Tenryu immediately asked to be accepted as a student at the Kobukan Dojo. He trained intensively at the Ueshiba Dojo for seventy days.

After the war, Tenryu opened a Chinese restaurant in Ginza, and became a popular sumo commentator on radio and television. He maintained contact with Morihei Ueshiba, and was a supporter of Yoshinkan Aikido.

Editor: To begin with, we would like to ask you about your experiences in the world of sumo.

Tenryu: The sumo society in those days was truly feudalistic. Sumo wrestlers couldn't make a living on the allowance they received from the association. They received gratuities, which they used for living expenses, from supporters. My stable master, Hitachiyama, said to me, "Tenryu, sumo wrestlers are not entertainers or flatterers. We are wrestlers. We practice a budo. You have to face things with a budo spirit." Even after I rose to the highest tournament level and became a sekiwake,[1] I couldn't possibly maintain my position with the allowance I received from the association. The owner kept all of the money for himself. I thought that this situation would ruin the future of sumo, and decided to take some action to reform the system.

From left, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, Zenzaburo Akazawa, Tenryu; far right, General Makoto Miura, Kobukan Dojo, 1939

I presented a reform plan to the association, with the approval of thirty-two people, including makunouchi, ozeki, and juryo wrestlers who were all students of Hitachiyama.[2] However, there was no way the association could swallow all of the changes we proposed. Members of the Kokuseikai, a right-wing group of that time, came into the room [at the Shunjuen Chinese Restaurant] and tried to remove us. We stood our ground, and stated that we would not leave until our reform plan was accepted. However, we were finally forced to leave.

We then cut off our topknots,[3] and established the Dai Nihon Shinko Rikishidan (Greater Japan New Sumo Association) and became independent. We had a number of problems. There were some right-wingers who thought that these troubles would come to an end if they killed me, the leader. Somehow, I managed to find a way out of this situation, and we declared our rebellion and gave a performance in Shitayanegishi in Tokyo on February 4, 1932. Then, seventeen wrestlers of the main association left, saying that it was too slack. These wrestlers established a sumo federation, and traveled around Japan continuing the reform movement. These movements had a great effect on the sumo world. Nowadays, not only yokozuna and ozeki, but any juryo wrestler with a family can make a living on the allowance from the association alone.

A reform movement arises in any period when the world is in a state of disorder. This was also the case at the time of the Meiji Restoration. Because of the chaotic state of the government of the Tokugawa Shogunate, people like Takamori Saigo, Shoin Yoshida, and Ryoma Sakamoto rose to action and disrupted society, leading to the Meiji Restoration. The process of reform can only be carried out if someone sacrifices his position and honor. I was thirty years old when I initiated the breakaway movement. I had, of course, no intention of returning to the sumo world. I established the Kansai [Western Japan] Sumo Association in Osaka, which continued from 1933 to 1937. During that period, I requested numerous times that the Kanto [Eastern Japan] Sumo Association compete against us in a tournament. But since we were the ones who were rebelling against them, they didn't respond well to the idea. If they had accepted a match with us and lost, it would have been disastrous for them. So, no matches ever occurred between us.

In 1937, Japan began to slide into the Greater East Asia War.[4] All political parties and groups were dissolved, and the Dai Nihon Yokusankai [Imperial Rule Assistance Association] became the sole governing group in Japan. Since Japan as a nation and the government were a united entity, we felt that the sumo world should not remain split into two separate organizations. I dissolved the Kansai Sumo Association, and brought seventeen promising wrestlers back to Tokyo, and asked the stable head to take care of them. He asked me what I intended to do, and I replied, "Since I have strongly opposed all of you for years and have been undutiful, I cannot possibly return. I will go to Manchuria and start over, and spread sumo there." Thus I left for Manchuria in 1938. I organized all the amateur sumo wrestlers in that country, and established the Manchuria Sumo Federation.

Were these amateur wrestlers Japanese?

Yes, all of them were former university graduates. I became the leader of these wrestlers, and planned a tour of Manchuria for the Japan Sumo Association. So I went to northern China from Manchuria in August and September, and negotiated with the Kanto Army and started the Manchuria tournament. The Japan Sumo Association supported all my efforts in Manchuria, and allowed me to become an advisor in 1941 or 42. Although I had rebelled against the association earlier, it was as a result of our revolt that the old sumo system was reformed, and a new organization, the one you see today, was created. None of the young wrestlers of the present Sumo Association know that history. Those things happened sixty years ago.

Would you describe how you first happened to see Ueshiba Sensei?

I had dissolved the Kansai Sumo Association in 1937, and in January of 1938, I went to Manchuria as a physical education instructor. In the spring of 1939, we invited Japanese teachers to come, and arranged to have high local officials observe their demonstrations, in an effort to spread Japanese martial arts in Manchuria as well. The arts demonstrated were kendo, judo, kyudo, and aikido. Since the dojo [of the university] had not yet been completed, we asked the participants to give demonstrations in the dojo of the Chuo Bank.

Ueshiba Sensei brought Mr. Inoue with him. After they showed some techniques, Ueshiba Sensei said, "You are probably thinking that we cannot possibly do these techniques without some sort of collusion between us. Since you are all martial arts practitioners, if there is a man among you, come and test this old man." However, no one stepped forward. At thirty-five, I was the youngest one there. I had recently arrived in Manchuria, and several government officials were observing the demonstration. I thought that I should test my own ability, and said, "Yes, I will try." Ueshiba Sensei replied, "You are Tenryu, aren't you? You are probably imagining that an old man like me won't be able to throw you very well. However, budo is much more than what you think it is." He offered his left hand, saying it was weaker than his right, and continued, "You must be quite strong physically. I am not putting any strength into my arm so you can do anything you want with it. Try!"

I thought that this old man was talking nonsense, and slapped his hand down as I grabbed it. But the moment I touched him I was startled. I felt as if I had taken hold of an iron bar. Of course, I knew very well from my experience in sumo that it would be useless to struggle against him. I immediately knew I had been defeated. However, I couldn't just leave things like that, and so I attempted to twist his arm up and out. He didn't move an inch. I tried again with both hands, using all my might. But he used my strength against me and I fell down.

What technique did he use on you then?

It was kokyunage. I didn't have any particular problem with the fall, since we take ukemi in sumo, too. But I was really amazed to know that such an art existed. That night, I visited the lodging house where Ueshiba Sensei was staying, and asked permission to become his student. He told me to come to his dojo in Ushigome in Tokyo. He said that three months of practice would be enough for me. I then requested official leave from the Minister of Manchuria, who had also observed the demonstration. I entered the dojo in Wakamatsu-cho in April 1939, and stayed through June.

Sensei, did you often take falls for Ueshiba Sensei during that three-month period?

Yes, many times. I practiced directly with him. There was only one occasion when I thought that Ueshiba Sensei fell during that time, but he may have done it on purpose.

Who were the uchideshi in those days?

There were people like Mr. Shioda and Mr. Okubo, who was quite good with his

Portrait of Tenryu while in competitive from

hands. Mr. Shioda was still a student at Takushoku University, and was the most energetic person in the dojo at that time.

What was it like practicing with Shioda Sensei in those days?

He had what could be called a competitive spirit. Once, while I was just standing there, he suddenly came over to me, twisted my hand, and threw me to the mat. He triumphantly shouted, "Hooray! I threw you!"

We became good friends. After three months, we decided to take a trip together to add the finishing touches to my training. We taught police officers of the Mie Prefectural Office, and then students of the Sumitomo Dojo in Osaka. After that, we visited Ueshiba Sensei's house at the foot of Mt. Kurama.

We understand that Sokaku Takeda Sensei and Takuma Hisa Sensei were in the dojo of the Asahi News Company in Osaka at that time. Did you meet them there?

[Previously] I had often met Mr. Hisa, but never Takeda Sensei. When I established the Kansai Sumo organization, Hisa Sensei was employed at the Asahi News. Articles covering our reform movement were carried in the paper from the January 7 to 15, 1932. They used the whole page of the local news section.

While we were in Osaka, the following incident occurred. I had spent time there five years earlier as the head of the Kansai Sumo Association, and thus had many acquaintances who asked me to dinner. I got permission from Ueshiba Sensei and went out with them. When I came back a little late, he had already retired, and I went to bed. The next morning when I greeted him, Sensei said, "Tenryu, you came back around ten thirty last night, didn't you?" He was not an ordinary person. He knew such things.

Later we went to Ueshiba Sensei's house near Mt. Kurama. We woke up at three

Shigenobu Okumura at Aikikai Hombu Dojo, Tokyo c. 2003

Shigenobu Okumura

Born Hokkaido, 1922-2008
9th dan, aikido

Shigenobu Okumura moved to Japanese-controlled Manchuria with his family as a boy, and went through its public education system. Okumura's first martial art's training was in kendo. In 1940, he enrolled in Kenkoku University, where he began training in Aiki Budo under Kenji Tomiki. During twice-yearly school breaks, he would return to Tokyo and participate in training at the Kobukan Dojo.

During World War II, Okumura was conscripted into the Japanese Imperial Army, and following Japan's defeat, interned in a prisoner camp in Russia for three years while serving as a Russian-Japanese interpreter. Upon his return to Japan, Okumura settled in Hokkaido for several years before relocating to Tokyo, at which time he returned to the Aikikai.

He joined the teaching staff of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo in the early 1950s, and played a significant role in the post-war development of aikido. Okumura taught at the Tax Revenue Institute until his retirement, after which he became a licensed tax accountant.

In 1973, he wrote a book entitled Aikido. *Okumura also traveled abroad on numerous occasions beginning in the mid-1980s. Okumura received the Budokorosha award from the Japanese government in 1987. He remained active as an instructor of the beginner's class at the Aikikai until shortly before his death.*

Would you tell us about your early years?

Early in his career, my father was working for the China-Japan Culture Society (Chunichi Bunka Kyokai). Back in Hokkaido, he'd been among the first students to attend Otaru Commercial High School, where he studied Chinese. During World War I, shortly after he graduated, he was sent to a post on the Shandong peninsula [in eastern China]. That was before I was born. Later, he went to Manchuria. I was born in Hokkaido, and was taken to Dairen in Manchuria at the age of three. I went through the public school system there.

I attended Kenkoku University[1] in Manchuria, which at that time, was like an East Asian version of the United Nations, in the sense that there were people there from all over East Asia. My major was in economics, but I also studied Russian and Chinese. During my summer and winter breaks (forty days and two months, respectively), I went back to Otaru. From Manchuria to Tokyo to Otaru, then back again.

My mother was a director in the Shotoku Women's Society in the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian, where she also took self-defense lessons from Aritoshi Murashige and Yoichiro Inoue. That was sometime around 1933. Back then, my image of Aikibujutsu was of my mother sitting there on the floor doing suwariwaza or some complicated thing. I was much more interested in kendo at the time, and consequently, didn't have much interest at all in Aikibujutsu.

I remember Mr. Murashige telling me once to not worry so much about the details, but just to make sure that I got in enough suburi (sword-swinging) practice. He and some others were members of the Dai Nihon Budo Senyokai, and often traveled around Manchuria in that capacity. Hidemaru Deguchi[2] was another one who came there.

I knew that Inoue Sensei had been in Manchuria, but did not know many details regarding his stay. Also, the fact that Murashige Sensei spent time is new information.

It seems that Inoue Sensei was teaching at the Dairen Police dojo through a connection with the Dai Nihon Budo Senyokai, and my mother began aikido because she was an official member of the Fujinkai (women's society) of the Budo Senyokai. I went to see her practice, but I didn't find the art very attractive. Murashige Sensei and Inoue Sensei came to the dojo together. Murashige Sensei taught me how to swing a sword. He had actual experience in killing people with a sword. This all happened later, though.

The Omoto established the Dai Nihon Budo Senyokai as a part of their activities, and left it in the hands of Ueshiba Sensei. Ueshiba Sensei himself was an enthusiastic believer... I think they used Ueshiba Sensei for purposes of spreading the religion, implying that one could become a genius like Morihei Ueshiba if one believed in the religion.

You later entered Kenkoku University in Shinkyo in 1940. Was Tomiki Sensei the main teacher at that time?

Yes, that's right. Originally, Rinjiro Shirata was supposed to have come to be the aikido instructor at our university. However, when Shirata Sensei was drafted, he was replaced by Kenji Tomiki Sensei instead. In those days, Tomiki Sensei was an instructor for the Kempeitai [military police]. In 1936 or 1937, Mr. Tomiki was actually recruited from the Kobukan Dojo to go to Manchuria by Hideki Tojo.[3] Tojo had become the provost marshal

of the Kanto Army sometime before Kenkoku University was established.

Tojo was chief of staff of the Kanto Army in China, and took the lead in practicing aikido, and was a benefactor, although he and Ueshiba Sensei didn't have direct contact with each other. Although Mr. Tojo never learned the art directly from Ueshiba Sensei, he knew it through Tomiki Sensei. He practiced a lot. When a military police school was established in Nakano, aikido became a subject in the school's regular curriculum. In about 1941, I went there with O-Sensei.

Whenever Tojo trained [in Aikibujutsu] with the Kanto Army, he had his non-commissioned officers take ukemi for him, with him doing all the throwing. Lieutenant General Maeda used Zenzaburo Akazawa as his uke. The military police took their Aikibujutsu training very seriously.

Mr. Tomiki came to Manchuria, and set up the Tomiki Dojo in Daiyagai. He was the Manchukuo government's official Aikibujutsu teacher at Daido Gakuin, and also an instructor to the military police. In those days, even if you had graduated from a university in Japan, you could not become a public official in Manchuria unless you studied at Daido Gakuin for six months or a year, learning Chinese, as well as Manchurian history and culture.

Kenkoku University was established a little later, in 1938, and from then on, Hideo Oba taught the military police, while Mr. Tomiki went to Kenkoku University as an assistant professor. At that point, he was still teaching aikido as he had learned it from Ueshiba Sensei; in other words, without the competitive matches he later introduced.

After I entered the university and studied with Tomiki Sensei and O-Sensei, I decided to practice only aikido. When I entered Kenkoku University, aikido was one of the subjects in the regular curriculum. Tomiki Sensei usually taught.

Was the aikido section at Kenkoku University considered a branch of the Kobukan dojo at the time you joined?

No, it wasn't a branch dojo. A lot of us were training in kendo, and both kendo and Aikibujutsu were part of the regular curriculum, as was jukenjutsu (bayonet training). So my kendo and jukenjutsu were actually part of my regular classes.

Ueshiba Sensei came to Manchuria from Tokyo every fall after Manchukuo was established. He first went to Kenkoku University as an advisor in 1939, and then again in 1940, 1941 and 1942. In about 1940, Mr. Inoue and Mr. Shioda visited as uke for Ueshiba Sensei. By 1943, however, the war was on, and travel there became impossible.

Sometimes Ueshiba Sensei came to our university, and sometimes he came at the invitation of the Manchurian government. He used to go there to get away from Japan. In our university, aikido was a required subject. Our university was probably the first one among all the government universities to have this requirement. Kendo, judo, aikido—all three were required subjects.

During that time, you were learning from Kenji Tomiki Sensei at Kenkoku University in Manchuria, then attending classes at the Kobukan Dojo whenever you were passing through Tokyo?

Photo taken outside of Shimbuden Dojo during a visit of Morihei to Manchuria; seated center, Kenji Tomiki and Morihei Ueshiba; standing second from left, Hideo Oba, second from right, Shigenobu Okumura, Shinkyo, 1942

Exactly. At the time, there were quite a few uchideshi at the Kobukan Dojo. Kanshu Sunadomari, for example, as well as a Toshinobu Matsumoto, and Koichi Tohei. Also, Kisaburo Osawa joined around September 1940.

We understand that there was a demonstration in Manchuria around 1942, in which O-Sensei participated.

The demonstration was held to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the founding of Manchukuo, with participation by many of Japan's leading martial arts exponents. Even among these, O-Sensei was regarded as something of a star. His ukes included Inoue, Yonekawa, Tenryu, Tomiki and Oba. Mr. Fujimoto, who later died in Siberia, also took ukemi for him.

According to Fumiaki Shishida Sensei's biography of Hideo Oba, Ueshiba Sensei became angry with Oba Sensei because he attacked him quite strongly during the demonstration.

In aikido, performing partners usually have some kind of agreement. However, Oba Sensei attacked Ueshiba Sensei seriously, which turned out to have a positive result. Apparently,

a naginata teacher called Sonobe[5] praised Ueshiba Sensei, and told him, "The demonstration you gave today was the best I have ever seen." This remark made Oba Sensei, who had been feeling that the whole world was against him, feel greatly relieved. At that time, I was a student and I saw this demonstration. The demonstration was as serious as any I have ever seen. I could tell that it was not a prearranged demonstration at all.

Did Inoue Sensei also demonstrate on that occasion?

Yes. He also took ukemi for Ueshiba Sensei. Ueshiba Sensei's demonstration lasted for more than 10 minutes, I believe. Ueshiba Sensei didn't give any explanation as is done today. This was because the demonstration was held in the presence of the Emperor [of Manchuria], and other martial arts were to be demonstrated as well. At this demonstration, Tenryu lumbered off the stage last, carrying the bokken, since he was the most junior.

I believe that Tenryu was a sumo teacher at Kenkoku University. In his later years, Tenryu wrote about his aikido practice in his autobiography.

Tenryu was the sumo wrestler who had led the ill-fated "Osaka Sumo Movement." He put considerable effort into that movement, but in the end, ran into financial difficulties, and he had to send most of his students and followers back to Tokyo. He himself undoubtedly felt too ashamed to return to Tokyo, and instead, he ended up being scouted by the Kanto Army, which then sent him to Manchuria.

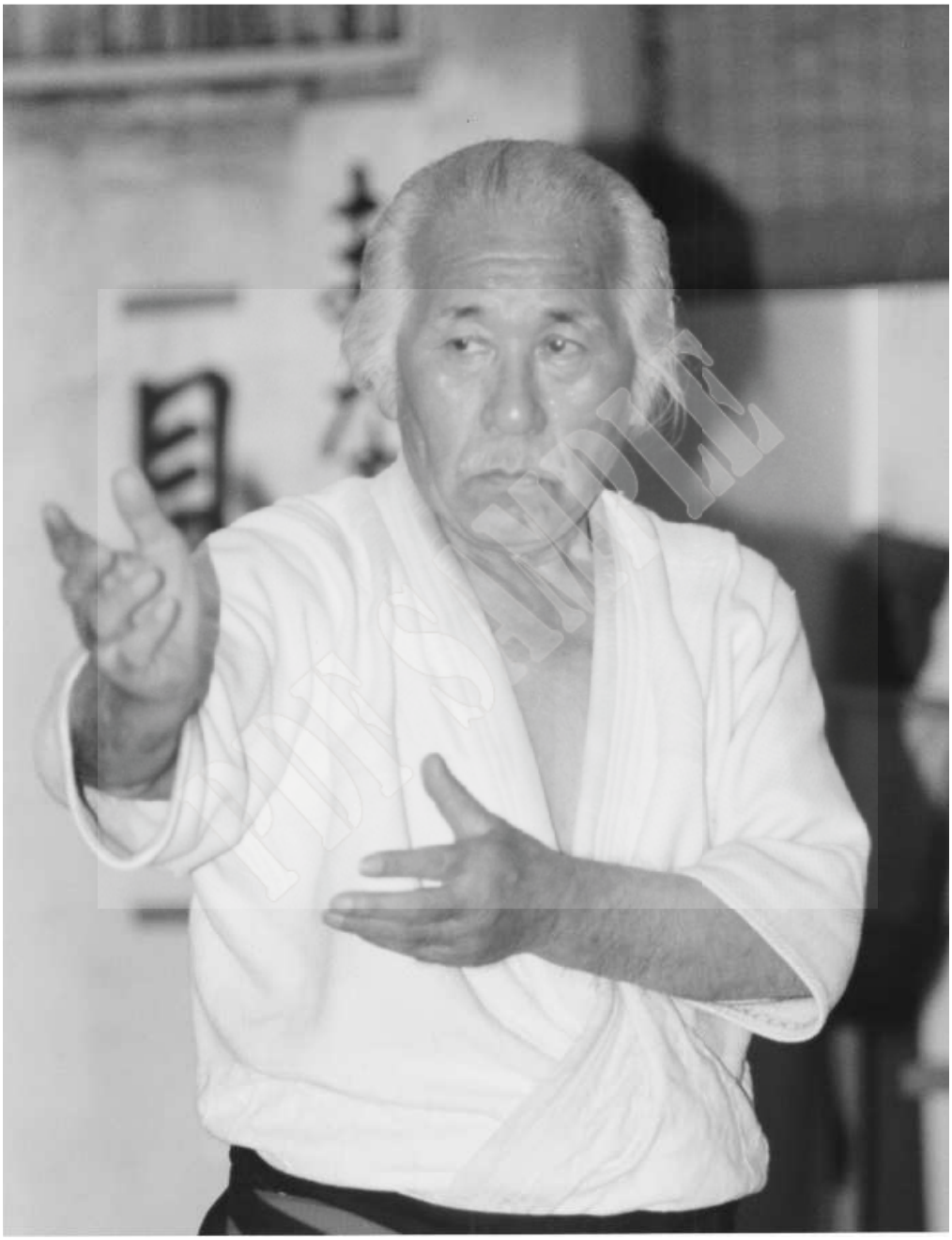
In Manchuria, the Kanto Army people told Tenryu that they wanted him to give them a victory in sumo, in order to "earn the respect of the local Mongolians and incline them to pay the Japanese more heed." Tenryu gave them that by winning against a Mongolian competitor in the local Ovoo Festival. This did indeed have the desired effect on the local population, who started listening to the Japanese more, and made Tenryu into something of a local hero.

Eventually, though, Tenryu started becoming a little too full of himself, so Ueshiba Sensei called him out. Tenryu really went after him, but before he could even engage, Ueshiba Sensei had already evaded him and applied a technique. I was there and saw the encounter with my own eyes.

Martial arts like judo and sumo generally begin with the competitors physically engaged using their preferred grips, so they tend to involve a lot of footwork. Aikido, in contrast, is mostly "handwork." In aikido, you have to be already handling your opponent before any actual engagement takes place. This was one reason the military was more interested in aikido than in arts like judo and sumo.

When Sensei came to Manchuria, he stayed at Mr. Tomiki's house instead of a hotel, mainly because of his vegetarian dietary needs.

At Kenkoku University, he was always accompanied and assisted by Mr. Inoue. The rest of us also learned a great deal from him during those times. Mr. Inoue was extremely skilled. He was probably even more skilled at aiki than Mr. Tomiki, in fact, because Mr. Tomiki actually came more from a judo background.



Minoru Hirai demonstrating Korindo Aikido in Tokyo at about age 75

Minoru Hirai

Born Okayama Prefecture, 1903-1998
Founder, Korindo Aikido

Minoru Hirai began learning Togun-ryu in 1914 from his grandfather-in-law in Okayama. He later enrolled in the Okumura Nito-ryu sword school in 1918. Hirai continued his study of martial arts by cross-training in other classical styles, including Takenouchi-ryu (jujutsu), Kito-ryu (jujutsu), and Saburi-ryu (sojutsu).

In 1938, Hirai established the Kogado dojo in Okayama, where he emphasized the relationship between the martial arts and the conduct of life. In 1939, he met Morihei Ueshiba and entered the Kobukan dojo. He became Director of General Affairs of Ueshiba's dojo in 1942.

Hirai represented the Kobukan Dojo in the government-controlled Dai Nihon Butokukai in 1942, and played a major role in the selection of the name of "aikido" as a category to group various jujutsu forms into the Butokukai classification system. He later received the rank of hanshi from this same organization. Hirai established the Korindo Dojo in Shizuoka in 1945. In 1947, he closed his Kogado dojo, and opened a Korindo dojo in Tokyo in 1953 where he taught for many years. Hirai remained active well into his 90s before his passing in 1998.

Editor: You first met Morihei Ueshiba, the Founder of aikido, in Okayama before the war, I believe. Would you describe the circumstances?

Minoru Hirai: There was a match factory in Nishikawa, Okayama, and next to the factory was the house of an Omoto believer. I went there on business, and Ueshiba Sensei happened to be present.

Ueshiba Sensei talked about his dojo, the Kobukan, and other topics for many hours. I had been learning Togun-ryu heiho, and as I listened to Ueshiba Sensei, I thought that what he was saying was quite unusual. That was our first meeting.

Later, I met him again at the residence of a different person, someone who was not an Omoto believer. I heard that Ueshiba Sensei happened to be there, so I went to see him. This time, Sensei suddenly invited me to come to Tokyo. The first time we met, he had said nothing about the idea, but he extended an invitation at our second meeting. That was actually the beginning of our relationship.

I decided to go to Tokyo, where Ueshiba Sensei had his dojo in Ushigome. Of course, I was interested in martial arts, but I really did not think of the consequences. I think perhaps two or three months passed before I met Ueshiba Sensei the second time, and we may have corresponded in the interim. In any event, I remember clearly going up to Wakamatsu-cho, where his dojo was located. When I look back, I think that our approach to both life and the martial arts was unusual. But I don't know whether I was the unusual one or Ueshiba Sensei was!

However, I already had my own way of thinking about how to use the jo and ken. So it might be more accurate to say that meeting Ueshiba Sensei reinforced my own thinking about the theory of the circle. I came to be confident that I was not mistaken in my ideas on the subject. I was in my prime and spent a lot of time thinking about these things, and naturally arrived at an understanding. I think Ueshiba Sensei had his own theories on the subject.

I believe you played a major role in the name change from Aiki Budo to aikido when you were a representative of the Kobukan Dojo at the Dai Nihon Butokukai.

I was the Director of General Affairs at the Kobukan, beginning around 1942, and I helped out Ueshiba Sensei in daily matters. "Aikido," rather than being a specifically selected name, was the term used to refer to "Butokukai-ryu" Aiki Budo within the Dai Nihon Butokukai. The headquarters of the Dai Nihon Butokukai were located in Kyoto and Butokuden centers were set up in all prefectures. Tatsuo Hisatomi from the Kodokan, and Shohei Fujinuma from kendo, were close friends of mine. The Butokukai was an independent, umbrella organization for the martial arts, and it also was in charge of martial arts in the police departments.

It was very difficult to create a new section in the Butokukai at that time. Mr. Hisatomi proposed the establishment of a new section, including arts for actual fighting based on jujutsu techniques. The techniques of yawara [an alternate term for jujutsu] are comprehensive, and also include the use of the ken and jo. I also made a number of suggestions, and Mr. Fujinuma and Mr. Hisatomi understood my ideas. However, had I insisted on these things, nothing would have been decided.

Hirai at private demonstration in Shizuoka for the Aiki News staff, 1993

There was discussion within the Butokukai about the choice of a name for this new section. It was discussed many times in meetings of the Board of Directors, and particularly in the judo and kendo sections. We had to consider all of the different individual arts encompassed when we tried to come up with an all-inclusive name. It was decided to select an inoffensive name to avoid future friction among the different martial arts.

Mr. Hisatomi argued for his proposal energetically, and explained that "aikido" would be a better name than Aiki Budo for this new section, because it would be better to stress the idea of "michi" or Way. He proposed that the name "aikido" be used as a term to designate an all-inclusive budo, and I agreed with him.

In other words, the term "aikido" was a cover-all term that could include other things as well. Mr. Hisatomi's idea was to intentionally select a name that would not be opposed by kendo or other martial arts, but rather an inoffensive, comprehensive term to group together all of the yawara schools. In the end, no one opposed this proposal.

Of course, this was certainly a big problem at the time, I can't say anything more specific about it. Everyone should follow the path they believe in.

Were you close to the late Kisaburo Osawa Sensei of the Aikikai?

We were friends. He was gentle, polite and truly a good man. We also did business together. I did my best at the Kobukai, and then turned over my duties to him. I think he

had a hard time. I asked both Seiichi Seko and Mr. Osawa to support Morihei Ueshiba Sensei when I left the Kobukai. I told them to work hard, because the martial path was a difficult one. To my regret, both of them are gone now.

After the war, when I was working at a dojo in Itakura, Kenji Tomita, who was working for the police, came to my dojo and said, "Hirai Sensei, won't you come back to the Kobukai and help Ueshiba Sensei again?" I answered that I believed in the path I was following and wanted to go my own way.

Demonstrating the jo at his private dojo in Shizuoka City

I haven't mentioned it before, but I was associated with Mr. Tomita outside of the martial arts as well, and I used to see him at Prince Hosokawa's house (the father of former Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa) during the closing days of World War II.

So you left the Kobukan to follow your own path.

Actually, I had my own dojo called the Kogado in Okayama while I was still a member of the Kobukai. Later, I changed the name from Kogado to Korindo.[1]

I understand that you also taught martial arts to the military police during World War II.

I was an instructor at the Army Military Police School. I published a book, which is now out of print, titled *Rikugun Kempei Gakko Taijutsu Kyohan* (Army Military Police School Taijutsu Manual). Taisabaki (body movement) is explained at the end of the book, but it really should be in front.

I was asked to help develop taihojutsu (arrest techniques) for the police a year or two after the end of World War II, together with Hironori Otsuka (karate), "Piston" Horiguchi (boxing), and Mr. Kudo (judo). It was a major reform, and we presented the new arrest techniques at the Nakano Tax Office. Many police officers from all over the country, who were trained in judo or kendo, came to see the newly developed arrest techniques. Today, these techniques are a part of the regular curriculum.

This system of arrest techniques was developed with the cooperation of many people. We developed techniques to deal with many different cases, such as someone armed with a pistol brought in from America. I took charge of the yawara component, and included some techniques to evade an opponent's ki. I explained that ki-evasion techniques were important, but nobody listened to me! I told them that the aim is not just to be strong. Someone who claims to be strong is actually weak if he uses only strength. You can't handle a real situation by using only force. It is important to deal with each situation case by case. This requires sensitivity and consideration. It is important to understand these points—however, you can't just learn them because you'd like to.

Would you tell us something about your early martial arts training? You mentioned that you studied Togun-ryu heiho as a young man.

Kuranosuke Oishi[2] was a member of the Ikedaya family of the Ako domain, in Okayama, and was adopted into the Oishi family. He trained in Togun-ryu, which was widely practiced in the Okayama area. Many people in this area studied this school, and when someone in Okayama referred to martial arts, they meant Togun-ryu.

The Togun-ryu is very strict about how the bokken is held. It is as if the bokken sticks to your hands.

How about Togun-ryu jujutsu?

[Hirai demonstrates] If I do this, I will break your arm. This is yawara. But you can't injure your training partner, so you have to stop your movement halfway. In yawara, we apply a technique softly, but still break the opponent's arm. You must know how to either kill or let your opponent live. The point is not to win, capture, or kill, but to live together.

Please tell us about your unique approach to taisabaki.[3]

My taisabaki kata were developed over a period of time. They were developed as a result of repeated practice of the sword and empty-handed techniques. I was training at a place called Akechitawa, located on the border of Okayama and Tottori Prefectures, in 1925. I liked Akechitawa and visited several times. It was a very peaceful place, and there

An autographed photo of Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba taken c. 1970

Kisshomaru Ueshiba

[Also Koetsu]
Born Ayabe, Kyoto, 1921-1999
Second Aikido Doshu

The third son of Morihei Ueshiba, Kisshomaru began practicing kendo as a child, and later, in his teen years, studied Aiki Budo at the Kobukan Dojo. He became Director of the Kobukan Dojo in 1942 while a student at Waseda University, following the Founder's retirement to Iwama.

After the war, Kisshomaru was employed by a securities firm, while at the same time, he operated the Aikikai Hombu Dojo in Shinjuku. Starting about 1955, he played a major role in the postwar revival of aikido, and oversaw the creation of hundreds of clubs in universities and companies throughout Japan. He also authorized the dispatch of numerous instructors abroad in a successful effort to spread aikido internationally.

Kisshomaru simplified and standardized the aikido curriculum, and authored numerous books on technique, as well as a biography of his father, Morihei Ueshiba. He assumed the position of Second Aikido Doshu following the passing of the Founder in 1969. Beginning in the early 1960s, Kisshomaru traveled extensively throughout Japan and abroad, in a teaching and administrative capacity. He remained active until shortly before his death in 1999. His son, Moriteru, succeeded him as the Third Aikido Doshu.

Editor: When was the first edition of your book *The Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba* published?

Doshu: On September 28, 1977.

About when did you begin to write the biography?

I can't say for certain when I actually began to write it. It's been nine years since my father died. About two or three years after his death, I gradually began to organize the materials. Then, around the beginning of 1976, I set about the task seriously, and asked for help from the publishing company. I did it during one stretch of time.

Prior to that, I had traveled to Hokkaido, all around Wakayama, to Ayabe and Kameoka, and also over to Tajima. I went here and there in search of traces of my father. It was the first time I had been to Hokkaido, where I went up into the mountains. I paid a visit to the shrine in Shirataki village. Even the people of the village didn't realize there was a connection between the shrine and Morihei Ueshiba. I went and asked the village headman for help in removing the nails—though it was discourteous to disturb the shrine—since no one was living there, and the outer shrine was nailed shut. When we went inside, sure enough, there was something written about a donation made by Morihei Ueshiba on such and such a date. So we came up with some new material, and little by little, the book began to take shape.

According to the preface of your book, you met an old man in Shirataki who had moved there from Tanabe with your father around 1912. I would imagine you heard many anecdotes from him.

That was a man named Takeda. He died shortly after I met him. My father organized a Settlers' Association in Tanabe, and the group went to Hokkaido. My father was the group leader, and Mr. Takeda was one of the members. He was a young man, probably in his teens, I would guess. He remembered those days, since he had shared both joys and hardships with my father. After aikido became popular, many people who practice aikido would go all the way to Shirataki, intending to explore the roots of aikido. They would never fail to look up Mr. Takeda to hear stories of those days, so he developed a style of storytelling. Though the stories were repetitive, they were quite interesting.

Is Shirataki still a small village?

Shirataki is in the process of becoming a depopulated area. As for any future development, well, it would be rather difficult. You begin to have frost in late September or early October, so it's a cold place. Nonetheless, it's quite a nice spot. It even has a hot spring. I went there in September, and thanks to the village headman, the council leader, and some of the village dignitaries held a banquet in my honor. It was truly wonderful.

It sounds like they gave you quite a reception…

Yes, they certainly did. In the stories Mr. Takeda told me, he pointed out the land which belonged to my father. He said that my father cultivated quite a large amount of property, which he had bought from the government. And according to Mr. Takeda, my grandfather,

who was a long-time council member in the village of Tanabe, was quite well-to-do. That's why my father, the Founder of aikido, could do as he pleased, and moved to Hokkaido backed by my grandfather's money. Takeda said to me, "Your grandfather was a great man. Because of this, your father was free to do aiki as he did. Your grandfather gave his son whatever money he wanted."

I had heard about these things before, but it was the first time I heard them directly from someone who had actually experienced them. When they traveled from Tanabe to Hokkaido, they went from Aomori via the Kampu ferry [present-day Seikan ferry]. There was no railroad to Shirataki. You had to go from Asahikawa towards Abashiri to get there. So they went by horse-drawn carriage. He told stories of various hardships, such as the time their carriage overturned in the snow when the horses became excited. I guess it must have been difficult in those days.

Did your father ever visit Hokkaido in his later years?

No, he never visited Hokkaido again. However, he went to Mongolia in about 1924, and, during the war, he went to Manchuria. Also, he went to Hawaii after the war, but he never returned to Hokkaido.

In your preface, you mention that O-Sensei urged you to write his biography. Would you elaborate on that, please?

There have been one or two other biographies written about my father. But always the authors have been caught up in their subjective viewpoints. They contain passages which have been dramatized to a certain extent. So my father often asked me to write an accurate biography based on accurate materials. However, it was difficult for me to begin to work on the biography while my father was still living, so I postponed it.

After he passed away, I considered it an urgent task, but I wasn't able to get to it immediately. It took about eight or nine years, and I believe I wrote the book after having gathered as many materials as possible. I think there are people who view Morihei Ueshiba in a number of different ways, each according to his own image. However, this biography was gradually pieced together based on accurate materials, using the things I saw and heard myself as a nucleus.

In the first chapter of your biography you also mentioned that it is dangerous to regard O-Sensei as a kami and his techniques as divine.

Well, to some extent, his technique was "divine technique." He was truly incredible. In Japan, generally speaking, it is believed that kami dwell in everything. Japanese Shinto is not monotheistic. So, in that sense, naturally O-Sensei is a kami of the martial arts, an aiki kami. That's one way of looking at it. But I think it's extremely dangerous to regard anyone as almighty. It can be carried to an extreme, just like it was during the Greater East Asia War [World War II] when Japan regarded herself as a "divine nation." It is important to avoid that kind of attitude, and to realize the true nature of aikido, keeping in mind the hardships the Founder, Morihei Ueshiba Sensei, endured to forge his path, and how he paved the way for us.

It really is an excellent book. It must have been an immense task.

Yes, the biography took quite a long time to write. I have written about eleven or twelve books dealing with aikido techniques. This must be about the twelfth book. Among the books I've written, the first one, *Aikido*, which I wrote nearly twenty years ago, and this one took the longest.

Seated second from left, Isamu Takeshita, Morihei Ueshiba, Kosaburo Gejo, Seikyo Asano; standing fourth from left Yoichiro Inoue, Tokyo, c. 1927

Why is it important for those who aspire to learn aikido to study O-Sensei's biography, or to put it another way, the path the Founder walked?

I think it is a fine thing to study aikido, or to make the decision to study aikido and continue to practice, whether it's because you find aikido a wonderful thing, or because you consider it exactly suited to your needs. And I think it's proper and necessary to practice with the origin of aikido kept firmly in mind. However, today you often find people who will start off running after having tasted only a little. They have no idea what aikido is about. If people think that aikido is merely moving the arms and legs, and if it begins to develop into a form which bears little resemblance to original aikido, it would be most unfortunate. That would harm aikido. So, it's important to realize the hardships that Morihei Ueshiba endured to create his art.

It goes without saying that the physical aspect of aikido is important. However, the

main thing is not only moving your arms and legs. Rather, is a matter of the spirit, a matter of the heart. If this spiritual training isn't expressed in the body's movements, then it isn't the true thing. It is wrong to think you are doing aikido because you can throw or knock down your opponent, or because you are strong. For example, in judo and karate there are strong people. There are also strong people in sumo. In aikido, too, there are strong people. However, true aiki is not merely having a strong body; it is not simply muscular strength. It is the unification of the mind and body. If you do not cultivate a spirit which remains unperturbed whatever the crisis, whatever the circumstances, then you cannot be said to be strong. So if you practice with an understanding of how O-Sensei created this path, what his viewpoints on humanity and life were, then you won't misunderstand the true aikido path as it should be. That's why I'd like everyone to actively read things like this biography.

Would you talk about the progression of names, beginning with Daito-ryu Jujutsu, used to refer to Morihei Ueshiba's art?

Well, aikido and Daito-ryu Jujutsu—now that aikido has become well-known, the latter is called Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu—are completely different, although there is a slight similarity in movements in techniques. But I think the spiritual training—I mean heart and spirit—and its interpretation are completely different. The Founder went to Ayabe at the end of 1919, and settled there in 1920. He opened a small dojo named the Ueshiba Juku in 1920. It was about a sixteen-mat dojo, as I remember it. It was the first time my father built a dojo and it was a shugyo dojo mainly for the Founder's personal training. At that time, the art was still called Daito-ryu Jujutsu.

Around 1922, Mr. Sokaku Takeda turned up and stayed with us for three or four months. He thought that my father's technique had changed. As it was different from Daito-ryu Jujutsu, they discussed adding aiki to the name After obtaining Mr. Takeda's tentative agreement, the Founder changed the name to Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu. Up until that time, there were some aiki techniques here and there, but they didn't exist as schools. It seems that there weren't any Daito-Ryu Jujutsu schools before Sokaku Takeda Sensei. People talk about the origin and history of Daito-ryu, but those names mentioned appear to be wrong. Beginning at that time, Mr. Sokaku Takeda also began to use the name Daito-ryu Aikijujutsu.

Then beginning in 1922, until 1924 or 25, people were already calling it Ueshiba-ryu Jujutsu, or Aikijujutsu, and they dropped the Daito-ryu. Later, around 1925 or 26, it was called Ueshiba-ryu Aiki Budo. My father came to Tokyo around 1926 or 27, and starting around that period, it was known as Aiki Budo and Aikijujutsu.

Then, in 1930, a wooden dojo was built here [in Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku]. There was a dojo here; our house was over there [pointing to the present site of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo]. All of this was my house. I bought this part of the lot after the war, and the dojo was here.

It became aikido in 1942, for various reasons. After the war, he thought we should teach and make public the true aikido. He went to Iwama in 1941 or 42. So, the art was born in Iwama, because that's where he was at the time.

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AIKIDO PIONEERS - PREWAR ERA

Interviews conducted by Stanley Pranin

Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969) drew on his extensive martial arts experience as a young man, fusing this knowledge with his deeply-held religious beliefs, to create the modern self-defense art of Aikido.

During his long career, Ueshiba associated with some of prewar Japan's most colorful characters, including famous jujutsu master Sokaku Takeda, the charismatic religious leader Onisaburo Deguchi, and numerous members of Japan's military, political, and business elite. Here is the captivating story of the birth of aikido, based on the first-hand accounts of Ueshiba's top students prior to World War II.

The interviews contained in *Aikido Pioneers – Prewar Era* have been meticulously edited from hundreds of hours of conversations conducted over a 30-year period with those closest to the Founder. These early devotees of the art offer an insightful portrayal of the character of the Aikido Founder, and a detailed description of his teaching and activities, spanning nearly half a century. More than 100 photos, many published for the first time, add an important visual dimension to the testimonies of the interviewees. This is an essential volume for those desiring to discover the roots of Aikido, a true cultural treasure of Japan.

About the Author: Stanley Pranin is a 5th degree aikido black belt, and Editor-in-Chief of *Aikido Journal*, formerly known as *Aiki News*. An avid historian of Aikido, Pranin has lived in Japan for more than 20 years conducting research into the art, especially the life and work of Aikido Founder Morihei Ueshiba. He is the author of *The Encyclopedia of Aikido*, and hundreds of articles written about every aspect of this Japanese martial art.

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